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THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS



THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

BY

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"ST. PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS" "AN INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT STUDY"
"OLD TESTAMENT STORIES AND HOW TO TEACH THEM" "THE CHURCH CATECHISM:
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DEDICATED
TO
MY FATHER-IN-LAW AND FRIEND
W. H. SIMMS-REEVE
OF SHERINGHAM



FOREWORD

IT seems to me that Canon Redlich has done a great service by gathering together as he has done the teaching of the Bible, and especially of the Gospels, on the subject of Forgiveness. He is good enough to attribute to words of mine his original desire to think through this great theme again, and I am most happy to have supplied the stimulus which led to the production of this book. I do not accept all his interpretations of Scripture, and some of my disagreements concern important points. Also near the end I am left wondering whether he is as antagonistic to Pelagianism as I should personally wish a theologian to be. But his main contention, which colours most of his other contributions, seems to me to be profoundly true, vitally important, and almost universally neglected. I am therefore most grateful to him for the work that he has done, and trust that it will rescue from neglect, alike in thought and practice, that vital truth.

WILLIAM EBOR.

April 4, 1937.

PREFACE

THIS book is an essay not on the forgiveness of sin, but on the forgiveness of sins—on that petition in the Lord's Prayer which lays down a condition of divine forgiveness, that to gain forgiveness from God it is essential that a man must first forgive his fellow-men. The book is also a plea that in all our teaching on repentance, fuller instruction should be given on the meaning of forgiveness and, in particular, of "forgiveness."

The subject is treated both historically and doctrinally. I have tried to be fair in criticism and accurate in historical treatment. If I have erred in either respect I beg to be forgiven.

In this volume Chapters I-III are an introduction to the teaching of Jesus. In them an attempt is made to bring out in outline the stages in which Israel in Old Testament days came to realise something of the reality and scope of forgiveness. The realisation was slow and incomplete but progressive, and depended on Israel's conception of God. These chapters aim to show that the failure to grasp the wondrous truth that God is Father, not of the privileged nation only but of all men, was the primary reason why it was impossible for a Jew to realise the intimate connexion between divine forgiveness and human forgiveness.

In the chapters which follow I underline heavily

Christ's teaching on forgivingness or a forgiving spirit as a necessary condition of divine forgiveness. Repentance—that is, an attitude towards God—alone is insufficient. Of these two conditions repentance is secondary though concomitant. The peremptory insistence on forgiving-ness by our Lord in the Lord's Prayer and elsewhere points to its being the fundamental and a precedent condition of the forgiveness of God.

Following the chapters on our Lord's teaching there are chapters dealing with the Apostolic and post-Apostolic Ages. We shall see how in the days of persecution whilst the fundamental condition laid down by Jesus was not forgotten, yet the desire of safeguarding the Church led to a greater emphasis on repentance.

Finally, there is a section entitled "a rationale of forgiveness," in which, amongst other things, I attempt to show that the differences between forgiving-ness and repentance support the primary position assigned to forgiving-ness. God will not forgive if man will not forgive. Even if the arguments for this primacy should prove unconvincing, yet, if I have achieved the supreme aim of this essay, which is to bring home to the minds of Christians the essential condition which must be fulfilled before God's forgiveness can be bestowed, I shall feel I have not failed.

For repentance is almost universally defined in conformity with that of the Prodigal Son as an attitude towards God. In this definition there is no place for the forgiving spirit. Repentance of this kind is generally taught as the one and only condition of divine forgiveness, and we have thought it best therefore to use the term in this sense. This is not the real meaning of repentance, for a true repentance involves an attitude

of forgiving-ness, and any penitence which is independent of a forgiving spirit is imperfect. Μετάνοια, the change of mind, must, for a Christian, involve both love for God and love for man. If repentance were thus uniformly defined, which it is not, there would be only one condition for forgiveness.

May I be allowed to state the origin of this essay? A few years back I was struck by a section in Archbishop Temple's book, *Christ's Revelation of God*, where he expressed more forcibly what he said on repentance and forgiveness in *Christus Veritas*, to which reference is made in the body of this book. Study and thought convinced me of the significance of Dr. Temple's words. The salient passages of Dr. Temple's book which created a revolution in ideas held by me in the past and caused a veritable conversion in my life are as follows :

"It is often said that our Lord's doctrine is that of free forgiveness on the sole condition of repentance ; . . . But there is a condition that we must fulfil if we are to make our own the forgiveness which God always and freely offers. And it is noticeable that repentance is not, in fact, mentioned in this connection. The one thing that is mentioned, and that with a most solemn reiteration, is our forgiveness of those who have injured us or are in our debt. . . . Our debt to God is infinite and cannot be repaid ; to Him we owe every moment of our time and every ounce of our strength, so that even if we are utterly devoted for the future without fault or defect, that cannot make good our failures in the past. But He freely forgives, unless we block His forgiveness by our own refusal to forgive the comparatively trifling injuries which are all that our fellow-men can do to us. But that refusal is fatal.

" . . . One condition, and only one, He makes, but that is utterly indispensable—it is that you extend to others the same forgiveness that you seek from Him."

To Canon Raven, whose encouragement led me to continue and complete the study of this vital subject of forgiveness, I owe a great debt.

I am indebted to the Clarendon Press for their kind permission to use the Revised Version in my quotations from the Old and New Testaments.

E. BASIL REDLICH.

LITTLE BOWDEN RECTORY,
LEICESTER.

January 1, 1937.

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forgiveness and man's external condition. Every man has the freedom to choose between good and evil, and God will help him. Forgiveness by God is essential to the new life. The Second Isaiah is the great prophet of forgiveness. God the Redeemer will abundantly pardon. But forgiveness is for Israel only. Repentance is, in all the prophets, the means of forgiveness.

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Mark iv. 10-12 is probably a theory of the Christian Church to explain why the mass of the Jews did not accept Christianity. The Unforgivable Sin is a state of sin and not an act. The Power to bind and loose is disciplinary in the context in Matthew, for it deals with a private quarrel. The Power to forgive and retain sins is bestowed on the Church and not on individuals; its interpretation to be seen in the history of the Apostolic Church. Baptism and forgiveness of sins.

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The Shepherd of Hermas advises against extreme rigorism, and allows one repentance for post-baptismal sin. Early in the third century a public disciplinary system is in operation, and is defined by Tertullian, who allows a second repentance. Later he becomes rigorist, and mentions six mortal sins which are irremissible. He argues against the bishop's power to forgive sins. Origen is as critical as Tertullian on the power of bishops to forgive by virtue of

their office and gives seven modes of gaining forgiveness. Cyprian gives the death-blow to the theory of irremissible sins, and grants reconciliation for all sins. There is yet no idea of sacramental absolution. Cyprian lays great stress on forgiving-ness as a condition of God's forgiveness.

After some time the idea of one repentance disappears. With the conversion of Constantine, public discipline is relaxed, and different systems are tried in its place, and by the twelfth century private confession with absolution is accepted as a sacrament, necessary for post-baptismal sin.

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The elements of each show that forgiving-ness is almost universally absent in repentance. Comparison of the two conditions for forgiveness show that the primacy of forgiving-ness is justified. It is a sharing of God's nature, is unselfish, is self-sacrificing, makes greater claims on spiritual energy, and is supported by a psychological analysis as being essentially unselfish. As it refers to acts done against us, and not by us, there is in forgiving-ness a sense of love which overshadows a sense of sin. It also makes for fellowship, gives joy, is saved from the dangers of emotionalism and mechanical effort. Forgiveness the great need of the world.

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PART I

CHAPTER I

THE PRE-PROPHETIC AGE

THE Christian view of forgiveness is dependent on belief in a Personal Being we call God. He is righteous Love. For the origin of the belief we have to rely on the Old Testament. There we find three independent traditions, two of which state that the revelation of God's ineffable personal name, Jehovah, and therefore of His character, was first made to Moses (Ex. vi. 2, 3, iii. 15); whilst the third states that the worship of the LORD, *i.e.* of Jehovah, existed before the Flood. The traditions of Exodus are to be preferred on many grounds, internal and external. The internal evidence shows us, amongst other things, that the lives of the patriarchs were associated with spots held sacred in the primitive beliefs of the Semitic races to which the patriarchs belonged. These sacred spots, such as wells and rivers, trees, and stones, according to Comparative Religion, were held to be the haunts of a spirit or deity or El. El was a generally accepted title for deity. Now one of the Exodus traditions (vi. 2, 3) says that God was worshipped in pre-Mosaic days as God Almighty, that is, El Shaddai. Again, no Israelite name or place in *Genesis* has Jah as a compound, and in the first six books of the Old Testament Jah enters only into two names—Jochebed and Joshua, both post-patriarchal, whilst El, as a compound, appears in Israel, Ishmael, Bethel, and Penuel. Thus the theory that in the days

of Enosh "men began to call upon the name of Jehovah" is an anachronism; the introduction of the name or worship of Jehovah in *Genesis* is an error in chronology. Shrines, which in later times were sacred to Jehovah, are misrepresented as being shrines of Jehovah from the beginnings of human life. This internal evidence is supported by the newly discovered Ras Shamra tablets, on which Dr. Jack has written a valuable monograph. The evidence of these tablets is first-class evidence, for it is contemporaneous with the lives of the patriarchs. In them the supreme God of the Canaanites is El, and Canaan is the "land of El absolutely." When we compare this statement with phrases in *Genesis*, such as "I am El, the God of thy father" (xlvi. 3), "El is the God of Israel" (xxxiii. 20), we infer that the patriarchs worshipped a personal God under the generic name of El. To them He was El Shaddai. Sometimes the plural form "Elohim" was applied to Him. This may not be so much a plural of majesty as a plural meant to instil into the minds of men that the God of the patriarchs summed up in Himself the qualities applied to Him in various centres of worship, such as "the ancient," "the most high," "the one who is seen," and "the almighty."

Evidence that El was a general name for deity is forthcoming from many modern discoveries. For example, in the Minæan Inscriptions of South Arabia, probably of the fifteenth century, God is known as El. The plural form Elohim is also found. Again, one of the most interesting of the latest archæological discoveries is that the name Abraham has been read on Babylonian tablets as the name of a farmer about 2200 B.C. It is also claimed that the name Hebrew appears as a tribal name in the form Habiru among the records of about

the same date, and the name of their chief deity is given as El or Elohim (Caiger, *Bible and Spade*, pp. 30 f.).

Thus, whilst the tendency of modern discoveries is to show that the narratives of *Genesis* reflect the conditions of the age and contain more historical value than was at one time believed, there is a special consideration which points to the revelation of the personal name of God as the best starting-point of our inquiry. No one can read the stories in *Genesis*, or any part of the Old Testament or of the New, without being aware of the importance attached to the name of a person or deity as an integral part of the nature of the man or god. That the personal name Jehovah was first revealed to Moses is almost universally admitted. How the name originated we do not know, but the insistence of the Old Testament is on the gradual unfolding of the nature and character of Jehovah (Ex. iii. 14, R.V. mg.). We therefore begin our history of forgiveness with the revelation made to Moses of the personal name of the God of the patriarchs.

THE REVELATION OF GOD'S NAME.

When Moses fled from Egypt, he sought refuge with Jethro, a priest of the tribe of Midian, in whose territory lay a sacred mountain of volcanic character, known as Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb. The Midianites, it would seem, worshipped Jehovah¹ as their god. He dwelt in heaven and came down to the holy mount (Ex. xix. 20). The insight of Moses enabled him to believe in Him, to proclaim Him as the God of Israel, and to identify Him with the God of the patriarchs.

¹ Wherever in our Old Testament or in this book "God" or "LORD" (spelt in capitals) appears, each term represents the personal name of God, spelt Jehovah in the Old Testament but held by most modern scholars to be more correctly rendered Yahweh.

“ And God said unto Moses, I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE (R.V. mg.): and he said; Thus shalt thou say unto the Children of Israel, I WILL BE hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations” (Ex. iii. 14, 15).

“ And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am JEHOVAH: and I appeared unto Abraham, and unto Isaac and unto Jacob, as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by My name JEHOVAH I was not known to them” (Ex. vi. 2, 3).

THE COVENANT.

The formal acceptance of the LORD by the children of Israel took place after their escape from Egypt at Mount Sinai. On this sacred mount, an altar was erected to represent the LORD; half the blood from some victims was thrown on the altar, and the terms of a covenant between the LORD and Israel were proclaimed. Then those present said: “ All that the LORD hath spoken will we do, and be obedient.” Finally, the rest of the blood was sprinkled by Moses on the people with these words: “ Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words” (Ex. xxiv. 3-8).

Jehovah's side of the covenant was probably represented by the few words, “ I am the LORD thy God.” The LORD took on Himself the responsibility of fighting for His own people and for them alone, of leading them, guiding them, and succouring them as a father his

children. "Israel is My son, My firstborn" described this new relationship (Ex. iv. 22).

Israel's side of the covenant was probably the Ten Commandments in a simplified form. This is definitely stated in *Deuteronomy* where we read: "And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even the ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone" (iv. 13).

HEBREW MODES OF THOUGHT.

The covenant was one between Jehovah and Israel as a nation or a community. Now one of the great modern contributions to the understanding of the Old Testament is the clearer conception of the Hebrew idea of personality, and in particular of corporate personality. It is now perceived that a community united by blood relationship, whether real or assumed, was looked upon as a person. A community to the Hebrew mind was not a mere collection of individuals, but a real entity in itself with claims upon each one of those who formed the body corporate. For example, in Jacob's words, "I am few in number," we have an instance of a personal name standing for a group. So also in the use of such phrases as "the house of David," or "the house of Omri," or in the phrase, "Rachel weeping for her children." Thus when the covenant was made Israel became the son, the first-born of Jehovah (Ex. iv. 22). So close was this bond that when Israel suffered, Jehovah suffered.

This concept of corporate personality will also explain how a sin committed by a member of the community affected the whole body, as in the plague which descended on Pharaoh's house because of the king's

desire for Abraham's wife, or in the destruction of Achan's family. Similarly the righteousness of a few or of one might save the whole community. The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah will illustrate this (Gen. xviii.) ; as well as the intercessions of righteous men such as Moses or Phinehas or Samuel (page 19). The same thought is suggested by Ezekiel's statement of the ineffectiveness of great intercessors. " Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness " (xiv. 14).

This conception of group personality inherent in the covenant on Mount Sinai reached its culmination in the idea of *hésed*, a word used by Hosea to teach that the love between God and Israel should be manifested in the love which men showed towards their fellow-men (page 34).

One other Hebrew mode of thought is brought before us. The " covenant " meant more than the mere agreement ; it included the relationship which followed it. Thought to the Hebrews was an active process. Joseph said to his brethren, " And as for you, ye meant evil against me ; but God meant it for good " (Gen. i. 20). Thus not only names but even words had a deep significance to the Hebrews. When they used a word they saw in it its results as well as its immediate meaning. Hence to remember included action as well as a recalling to memory, to love included the consequences of the sentiment, to save meant actual deliverance, to cover a sin meant the reconciliation following the covering. So also abstract ideas were embodied in narrative. " The permanent value of the Old Testament narrative consists in the beliefs and ideas that inform it, and that made

and still make history " (Cook, *The Old Testament : A Reinterpretation*, p. 109).

Jehovah's part in the Covenant :

I am the LORD thy God.

The Covenanters' part :

1. Thou shalt have none other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt do no murder.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

What did these ten commandments mean to the covenanters? How were they interpreted in the days of Moses and in the six centuries of the pre-prophetic age?

In the first place, we see that for Israel, and for Israel alone, there was only one God. Other nations had their own deities, and were entitled to worship them. Chemosh and Milcom and other national gods were as real as the LORD. Each national God had claims on his respective worshippers and was worshipped in his own territory. When Israel by conquest, settlement, and peaceful penetration took possession of Canaan, this land became the possession of Jehovah. In Canaan only could the LORD be worshipped. David on being driven into the

territory of another deity realised that he would be compelled to worship the deity of that country, "for they have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods" (1 Sam. xxvi. 19). Ruth the Moabitess was ready to accept the God of Israel when she left Moab to dwell in Canaan, for did she not say to her mother-in-law "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth i. 16)?

Secondly, Jehovah as the God of Israel cared only for Israel and was an enemy of other nations and their gods. Between these national gods there was keen rivalry. "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?" sang Moses and the children of Israel (Ex. xv. 11). "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods," said Jethro (Ex. xviii. 11).

The covenanters on their part were to worship the LORD. There were to be no other gods "before" Him, that is to say in His presence, in front of Him, and therefore compelling Him, against His will, to behold them. All images of Him were not forbidden, but only "graven" images, or images for the construction of which the use of a tool was necessary. The LORD's name may be taken, but not for a frivolous or blasphemous purpose. To swear by the LORD was a token of reverence, provided it signified honesty and truthfulness of purpose. Hence the frequent use of expressions such as "As the LORD liveth," "The LORD do so to me and more also," "As the LORD liveth and as thy soul liveth."

Thirdly, sin was a breach of the covenant, for Israel now had relations with a personal and moral God. Religion was now connected with morality and linked with it indissolubly. But there was one limitation. The

Decalogue applied only to Israel. That is to say, a member of the covenant, whilst he was bound to observe its terms in his relations with the LORD or another member of the covenant, was not bound by any of its terms to any one outside the LORD'S domains or outside the covenant.

Lastly, we see the great insight of the legislator in setting before the covenanters a high moral standard in that the tenth commandment dealt not with overt external acts, as the other nine did, but with hidden thoughts and feelings. The story of Sarah in the court of Abimelech, the desire of David for the wife of Uriah, and the coveting by Ahab of a piece of ground, will sufficiently show that the inclusion of this commandment was by no means unnecessary.

The covenant was a redemptive act imposed by Jehovah on Israel. It made Israel a unity and gradually welded it into a nation. Jehovah became father of Israel, and by the covenant He, on His side, as one of the parties to the covenant, had His obligations towards Israel. He would never destroy the nation (Isa. xli. 9). Here, then, we may see the germ of the conception that God was in continual fellowship with Israel not only in protecting them, but also in inspiring them and being willing to forgive. He would be their God, however much they sinned and in all circumstances of their history.

The moral side of the covenant was an element of great value and, until it was replaced by a new covenant, it laid down a standard of individual conduct, for, though the covenant was made with Israel as a nation, it bound every individual Israelite to observe its terms. Thus, whilst it is true that the significance of the rela-

tionship of each individual to Jehovah was not yet perceived, yet within the terms of the covenant we find loyalty to their God was expected of each covenanter.

Jehovah on His part would, as He did with Abraham, Ishmael, Joseph, Samuel, Hannah, and Ruth, enter into personal relationships with some individuals whether in love or in punishment, or as a third party to a contract, or as a guide in times of crisis, or as their vindicator.

Further, in the dealings of individuals one with another, a breach of the covenant was as much a sin as the worship of another God. Thus, the idea of a covenanter's duty to his fellow-Israelite was linked in the covenant with a vivid consciousness of Jehovah's personal interest in His people. A sin against a fellow-man was a sin against God. Such a view is expressed in the story of Joseph: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9). It is expressed also in the great penitential psalm, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Ps. li. 4).

We may say that, till Israel ceased to be a nation, it was to the covenant and within its terms that appeal was made to Israel to amend its ways, as, for example, in later years when Amos summoned Israel to practise justice (v. 24), Hosea demanded mercy (vi. 6), and Micah demanded both justice and mercy (vi. 6-8).

The covenant had both strength and weakness. As a preparation for the fuller revelation which was to come with the prophets, and as a standard of conduct in an age when the idea of national gods prevailed, it was an instrument of progress. We see in the life of Israel under the covenant the beginnings of ideas which were to come into full maturity in the teaching of Our Lord. Amongst these ideas is that of forgiveness. But a covenant

with a people as a mass has not the same penetrating power as a covenant with each individual. "The true kingdom of God cannot be established by a lump operation like that of the Exodus" (Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 215). It is therefore with the covenant as a background that our study of forgiveness in the Old Testament must be guided.

The word for forgiveness in the Old Testament when bestowed by God on the nation or on the individual means the restoration of the covenantal relation, and when bestowed by man on man is the restoration of friendly relations. As an illustration of the latter, we may take the case of Joseph's brethren who were bidden by Jacob to say to Joseph, "Forgive, I pray thee now, the transgression of thy brethren, and their sin, for that they did unto thee evil" (Gen. l. 17). There is no difference in the meaning between divine and human forgiveness; in both cases it is a restoration to fellowship. This is the same meaning as is attached to forgiveness in the New Testament, though, as we shall see, with the deeper conception of the Love and Fatherhood of God, the meaning in the New Testament is richer in content. The conditions of forgiveness are generally repentance or sorrow for wrong-doing and an intention to reform or to amend, and it is in the fuller implications of repentance, and particularly in the insistence on human forgiveness, that the New Testament makes a revolutionary change.

THE CHARACTER OF JEHOVAH.

When the God of Israel was proclaimed as the LORD on Mount Sinai, a character was assigned to Him by Moses. "The LORD, the LORD, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy

and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin : and that will by no means clear the guilty ; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation " (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7).

It is clear from the declaration of Moses that the God of Israel was at first held to be not only forgiving, merciful, and gracious, but also stern, and unforgiving. Ideas of sin and of the forgiveness of sins were present, but they were confined within certain limits. This we have seen already when we dealt with the bond of the covenanters, and it is fully illustrated by the incidents which were associated with the life of Israel in the wilderness and in Canaan.

The mercy of the LORD bore with Israel in the wilderness, even though He punished. He never forsook them though they rebelled, disobeyed, and forgot Him. He knew their moral frailties, but, His promise once made, He would be patient with them and bring them to the land of their fathers' sojournings. This was one side of His character. But in the wilderness legends and stories, and in the stories of the settlement in Canaan, more emphasis is laid on His sternness and wrath.

To discriminate between these contradictory ideas was a slow and painful process for Israel. It is a warning to us not to appeal to the Old Testament, as appeal could be made, to justify revenge and cruelty and the spirit which neither can forgive nor forget.

The conception of the LORD, with its strength and its weakness, is reflected in the realm of forgiveness. Israel attributed to Him the willingness to forgive iniquity and transgression and sin, but He did not leave the guilty

unpunished, and He visited the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7). Forgiveness, therefore, came from the goodwill or grace of God, but forgiveness was not always a certainty.

Because of the many misunderstandings which follow a wrong appreciation of the motives of Jewish historians, let us consider the implications of some of those narratives which deal with punishment.

The story of the *Visit of the Spies* (Num. xiv.) gives us a key to ideas of punishment in the Mosaic age. Israel, in ignorance of God's love for them, could find no explanation of their failures in the past or of their long sojourn in the wilderness. Believing that God was the author of good and evil, they attributed good and evil to Him, and misjudged Him. In this story, He has to be appealed to on the ground of His pride and self-interest. What would the other peoples think of Him? They would laugh at His failure to carry out His intention. They would say that, because He could not fulfil what He swore to do, He killed the Israelites as one man by smiting them with a pestilence. The LORD would be dishonoured and brought into disrepute. The LORD's reply was that He had "pardoned them."

In this, as in many a story of the Old Testament, we find illustrations of the failure of the Jews to distinguish between forgiveness and punishment. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that they looked for the assurance of forgiveness in the taking away of punishment and suffering—an attitude of mind not unknown in our own day. The great prophets saw that God fully forgave, for He was ever the Father of rebellious and sinful Israel, but His righteous love demanded that sin should be punished for His children's good. He remained true

to the covenant, however undeserving Israel was of His mercy. These are ideas which give permanent value to the stories which represent Jehovah as stern and pitiless.

The Amalekites.—The Amalekites had raided the camp of the Israelites—an ordinary tribal raid—and the attackers were defeated. For this attack on the camp, the LORD, we are told, had no mercy on the whole of the tribe; "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Ex. xvii. 8-16). This command was kept in remembrance. "Remember what Amalek did . . . thou shalt not forget," were the injunctions of Moses many years after the event (Deut. xxv. 17-19). Four hundred years later Samuel bids Saul destroy "the sinners, the Amalekites." The king does not destroy them all, but spares Agag and the best of the cattle. Samuel rebukes Saul and tells him that "to obey is better than sacrifice," and that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." Saul acknowledges his sin and asks for pardon. This is refused: "Thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel" (1 Sam. xv.).

In this story we see the persistence of the idea of group personality and of the *hérem*. The closeness of the tie between Jehovah and Israel is represented as the remembrance of God who never forgot, as Israel in this case did not forget, a wrong done to His chosen race.

The Sons of Eli.—When Eli's sons commit sacrilege, Eli rebukes them and lays down his theory of forgiveness, namely, that if a man sins against another God apportions the blame, but if a man sins against God the sinner cannot escape divine punishment. "If one

man sin against another, God shall judge him : but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him " (1 Sam. ii. 25) ? According to Eli, therefore, ceremonial sin of a serious nature could not be forgiven, but would be visited by chastisement.

The Adultery of David.—Our last illustration will be that of David's sin with Bathsheba. For this, says Nathan the prophet, the sword shall never depart from David's house, and the king's wives will be given to his neighbour, and he will lie with them openly. God therefore, according to Nathan, will act on the principle " An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." When the king admits his sin, Nathan says that David will not die, but the child of the union must. " And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David " (2 Sam. xii.).

The incidents to which reference has been made, show us that there was a conflict of views on the conception of God in the days when the covenant of Mount Sinai controlled the life of the nation, and that in this conflict the writers attached more weight to the sternness of God. We may with justice question this interpretation of history, whether national or individualistic, but we can also perceive how profoundly the writers of history sought to emphasise the truth of the righteousness of God and His demands for a high moral standard in men's dealings one with another. Isaiah has well expressed this thought : " I will make judgment the line, and righteousness the plummet " (xxviii. 17). So also Malachi exclaims : " Have we not all one father ? hath not one God created us ? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers ? " (ii. 10).

Again, in the pre-prophetic days, forgiveness, as we have seen, was linked up with the mitigation of punishment. But this misconception of the connexion of punishment with forgiveness must be reckoned along with the prophetic belief in the faithfulness of the LORD who always was faithful to His covenant promise. He kept the oath which He swore to the fathers and bestowed on Israel the land of Canaan (Jer. ii. 7) even though they transgressed the covenant and revolted against Him. Forgiveness therefore included more than mitigation of punishment. Israel was always the people of God, He could not give them up (Hos. xi. 8). If Jehovah had imposed a covenant on Israel, His motive was His love for them. If His wrath fell on sinners, it was not because wrath was one of His attributes. In spite of the incidents which represent Him as unforgiving and implacable, a more beautiful idea was suggested in later years, "In overflowing wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee" (Isa. liv. 8). Wrath is with God a transient emotion.

We may therefore appeal with more assurance to the view of the Psalmist who points out that forgiveness and mercy rather than anger and punishment were to be preferred as manifested in the history of Israel.

"But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not :

Yea, many a time turned He His anger away,
And did not stir up all His wrath.

And He remembered that they were but flesh ;
A wind that passeth away, and cometh not
again " (lxxviii. 38, 39).

In the incidents of the Golden Calf and of the Spies, reference is made to intercessions of Moses for his sinful people. In the former, Moses is said to make an atonement for the sin of the people. So also Phinehas by making an atonement turned away God's wrath from the children of Israel (Num. xxv. 10-13). In another instance, incense is the medium of atonement (Num. xvi. 4-6). Now the Hebrew word for atone (*kipper*) means to *cover*, to *invalidate*, to *blot out*, and the contexts show that what is covered is the sin, and, being covered, the effects of the sin in some way are done away and its iniquity taken away (Ps. lxxxv. 3). The eyes of God, so to say, cease to behold the offence. It is God Himself who atones, though, as we have seen, human beings may intervene to bring about this covering. To atone or cover is therefore a symbol of forgiveness. Hence God's anger was restrained and sin was covered by the intercession of men who appealed to God's mercy and to His covenant. With or without intercession there must be repentance and confession of sin. But most important of all, the intercessors or sinners, as the case may be, must enter into the righteous indignation of God and be at one with His mind. In this consideration may be seen the faint perception of that condition of forgiveness which requires that before God can forgive the penitent he must share in the spirit of God by forgiving his fellow-men.

Thus in the days of this covenant we can see that forgiveness was in reality a thing apart from the mitigation of punishment. God forgave because He kept His part of the covenant, though Israel broke its terms incessantly. Fellowship with Him was available both to Israel as a national unit and to each individual of it.

HUMAN FORGIVENESS.

The discoveries of Petrie at Old Gaza point to the *hérem* or ban as originally a Palestinian custom which was later adopted by the Israelites. But it was not carried out in its fulness in all cases or at all times by the believers in Jehovah. Modern criticism has taught us that there was no "conquest" of Canaan and no rapid advance from victory to victory, but that early victories were followed by methods of peaceful penetration for two centuries. Had the Canaanites been destroyed on the scale suggested in *Joshua*, there would have been no Canaanite left in the land in the days of the Judges. The ban was not always enforced against communities but against an individual or his family, which was identified with him.

But when Israel entered into war and fought for their inheritance, passions were let loose. No quarter was given, nor was treachery disdained as a means of victory. Ehud gains access to Eglon on the plea of a secret errand, and then slays him (Judg. iii. 15 ff.). Jael breaks the laws of Bedouin hospitality and slays her visitor Sisera (iv. 17 f., v. 25-27). Samson, a legendary hero, has no idea of morals and quickly retaliates any wrong done to him (xiv. 19, xv. 5). He prays to God for strength to be avenged of the Philistines, and then dies with his enemies (xvi. 28-30). The Danites treacherously slaughter the peaceful inhabitants of Laish (xviii. 27). The outrage of Gibeah leads to intertribal war, and the Benjamites are all but annihilated. It is a terrible story of inhumanity, gross bestiality, and the abuse of the laws of hospitality (xx. 21). The advance in the knowledge of human forgiveness during the nomadic

stage of life in Canaan has given way to hatred and murder even within the tribes of Israel. Samuel, the prophet, is not guiltless of the spirit of unforgiveness. To slay Agag in cold blood is to him a religious duty.

But with more settled conditions under David, there is once more an advance. The prophets become protectors of the oppressed and advocates of forgiveness. David, himself, in spite of many acts of barbarity and cruelty and deception, proves that, though he is no saint, he is imbued with the spirit of kindness and can forgive. Twice he forgives Saul who sought his death (1 Sam. xxiv. xxv.). "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my lord, the LORD's anointed, to put forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the LORD's anointed" (xxiv. 6, cf. xxvi. 9). On the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in battle David laments over them in a noble elegy :

"Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant
in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided ;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions" (2 Sam. i. 23).

David bears no resentment against Saul, but freely forgives him as he forgives Shimei, who had "cursed the LORD's anointed" (2 Sam. xix. 17-23). His gratitude for the friendship of Jonathan, whose love to him "was wonderful, passing the love of women," is never forgotten. "And Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came unto David, and fell on his face, and did obeisance. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant ! And David said unto

him, Fear not : for I will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father ; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually " (2 Sam. ix. 6-13). David shows as forgiving a temper in his treatment of Nabal. This farmer, after refusing David some food, proceeds to insult him. " Who is David ? And who is the son of Jesse ? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master." David even forgives his personal insult. When Abigail, Nabal's wife, brings gifts to David and implores his forgiveness, David says unto her, " Go in peace to thine house " (1 Sam. xxv.). Lastly, David, king though he was and had the power of life and death, humbly accepts a public rebuke from Nathan (2 Sam. xii).

Yet David is not wholly free from personal resentment. He promised to spare Shimei, but on his death-bed he charges Solomon to put Shimei to death and, in the case of Joab, forgets all that Joab had done for him and his kingdom by advising Solomon not to let " his hoar head go down to the grave in peace " (1 Kings ii. 6-8).

There are other examples of human forgiveness in pre-prophetic days of which the most famous is that of Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers. Another striking instance which implies the recognition of duty to others is that of the Canaanite king, Adoni-bezek. He is aware that as he had done to others, so God was dealing with him, according to the law of retaliation. " And Adoni-bezek said, Three score and ten kings, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table. As I have done, so God hath requited me " (Judg. i. 6, 7).

CHAPTER II

THE PROPHETIC AGE

IN the eighth century there came a striking development in the conception of God and, with it, a purer conception of the mercy and loving-kindness of God. It was in an age of social injustice, moral deterioration, religious insincerity, immorality practised under the cloak of religion, and apostasy, that there arose the first great ethical prophets, Amos and Hosea in the north, Isaiah and Micah in the south. Each of these prophets made special contributions to the conception of God, but we shall confine ourselves to those aspects which bear directly on our study. For example, we shall not dwell in detail on the thought of God as the Lord of history or deal at length with the problems of sin and suffering which led a later prophet, Ezekiel, to expound a kind of philosophy. Neither shall we refer to the great Christian concept of faith which was for the first time set forth by Isaiah, nor shall we develop the thought of the holiness of God on which the same prophet laid such emphasis. We shall instead refer only to the teachings of the great prophets which help us to understand what each had to say on the subject of forgiveness, though some of the prophecies may be of later date.

In the prophetic writings, the concept of sin varies with the conception of God. Amos, conceiving Jehovah as primarily the God of righteousness demanding right

conduct from Israel, refers to sin as injustice and oppression of man by man. Hosea, to whom God is supremely loving, thinks of sin as alienation of affection. Isaiah, who conceives of God as holy and transcendent, defines sin as insensibility to that which is holy. The Second-Isaiah, whose thought of God is primarily that of Redeemer and Saviour, thinks more of forgiveness than of sin. Frequently do we find that, in the eighth-century prophets, sin is traced to the absence of the knowledge of God—that is, to wrong conceptions of Him.

The references to forgiveness are mainly as it affects Israel and not mankind in general. Thoughts are in the main fixed on the destiny of Israel and are circumscribed within the conditions of the times. There are very few general principles laid down. The experiences either of the prophets or of the nation are also reflected in their conception of God. The prophet Amos, who lived in the wilderness of Tekoa, thinks of the sternness of God, the family troubles of Hosea lead him to think of God as loving, the vision of Isaiah in the Temple brings forth the concept of God as holy, the loneliness of Jeremiah teaches him the principle of God's communion with the individual, the exile guides Ezekiel and the Second Isaiah to thoughts of a glorified community and of a Suffering Servant of salvation.

There is in the writings of these earlier prophets a limitation in the conception of sin and of forgiveness, for both are national. It is quite possible that this limitation was due to the influence of the covenant relation between God and Israel as a nation. For if the individual was lost in the community, and had no recognised and permanent place as a religious unit,

there was no possibility of ethical and spiritual progress. For example, if an Israelite asked how he was to be assured that in regard to himself as an individual the covenant between God and the nation was unbroken, he could get no guidance from the covenant relation. Therefore, in the absence of any direct personal relation to God, he thought he found this assurance in material prosperity. Profound thoughts of sin and forgiveness were not possible when the prophets dealt with Israel as a national unit. It was with the destruction of the kingdom that real progress began. But this does not mean that the idea of a community was either abandoned or was held to be harmful to religion. It did mean that a new community had to be formed by a union of individually regenerated men and not by mass action.

The later prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel began with the individual, and religion was then understood to mean something between God and each Israelite. Hence came the thoughts of individual men as sinners, of forgiveness of sins as within the reach of each sinner. Forgiveness is now possible for all sin which will be remembered no more. It is God alone who forgives sin, and the God of Israel is unique in this manifestation of His mercy. "Who is a God like unto Thee, pardoning iniquity?" (Mic. vii. 18). "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, . . . and will not remember thy sins" (Is. xliii. 25).

Whilst therefore the covenant influenced thought, we find, however, little definite reference to the covenant on Mount Sinai. We find it in Hosea who refers to the transgression of the covenant and to trespass against the LORD (vi. 7, viii. 1). It would therefore seem as if

the influence of the covenant of old was waning with the decline of national life until it gave place to a new covenant which came to birth with the fall of the state. This may explain why the prophets spoke as His mouthpiece and appealed to Jehovah rather than to an external covenant in their definition of sin, which now is something contrary to the character of God, and is an act done against Him personally. Hence possibly, too, the inferior position assigned to sacrifices in comparison with acts of mercy and goodness.

One other point may be noted. References are found in the Psalms and in the Priestly Code, which was post-exilic, to a class of sins known as "presumptuous" (Ps. xix. 13) or as sins done "with an high hand" (Num. xv. 30). These were sins done intentionally, sins for which no atonement was possible and which were therefore unforgivable. For sins of ignorance and inadvertence sacrifices availed, but sins done with a high hand were not to be atoned for by sacrifice. To atone is to cover, and, as stated above (page 19), covering is a symbol of forgiveness. The Priestly Code therefore introduced a new idea into religion. According to it, sins of a light nature can be removed by ritual observance, but there is a sin which can never be forgiven. This unpardonable sin is that done with a high hand, intentional, deliberate sin. "The soul that doeth aught with an high hand, whether he be home-born or a stranger, the same blasphemeth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people."

In the period after the exile we also find two theories which are not really in opposition but are complementary. The Second Isaiah speaks of an everlasting covenantal relation under which God will abundantly pardon on

repentance (li. 3, 8), and the Psalmist speaks of a broken and contrite heart as being sufficient sacrifice (li. 1, 17). But the Priestly Code, on the other hand, requires other sacrifices than that of a contrite heart. These sacrifices are for unintentional sin, and forgiveness is promised on certain conditions and the observance of a prescribed ritual. These conditions are confession and repentance. In this essential therefore the prophet and the priest are in agreement, though whilst in the prophets sin is said to be covered by God Himself without any external rites, and the covering is bestowed of His compassion, in the Priestly Code it is the priest who makes atonement according to a stated ritual.

AMOS admits that he was no professional prophet, but that Jehovah had taken him from his work as a herdman and a dresser of sycamore trees to prophesy unto His people Israel. From his home in the highlands of Judah he made his way to Bethel, the chief sanctuary of the northern kingdom. There he warned Israel of its approaching captivity, inveighed against the moral conditions of the nation, denounced the callousness of the rich, their luxury and their immorality, and proclaimed Jehovah primarily as the stern upholder of moral righteousness.

Jehovah was not the God of Israel alone, as the peoples believed. He was even then raising up Assyria to do His behests. The people might argue "us only does the LORD know," but, added Amos, because of this special privilege which they had misused, He would visit upon them all their iniquities (iii. 2). As for the "Day of Jehovah," their expectations would be falsified; it would not be a day of light but of darkness, "very dark,

and no brightness in it " (v. 20). If the nation thought that thronged sanctuaries and innumerable sacrifices, accompanied by songs and music, satisfied the LORD, they should know the truth, for the message of the LORD was,

" I hate, I despise your feast-days,
And I will not smell in your solemn assemblies "
(v. 21).

Thus, in the view of Amos, God was primarily the God of righteousness. The stern life of the herdman in the highlands of Tekoa is reflected in his conception of God. It was left to his contemporary, Hosea, to proclaim the complementary truth that Jehovah was the God of love.

The conception that Jehovah was the personification of righteousness carried with it the eternal truth that privilege meant responsibility. As Israel was God's chosen race, He expected more from them than from other nations.

This argument in Amos is worthy of notice. The righteousness of God is such that Israel, because of the special position it occupied in the world as the nation elected to be the medium of the revelation both of the character and will of Jehovah, must display a standard commensurate with its high calling. We may use symbols which Jesus used and say that Israel was to be a light to the world and to be the salt of the earth. These symbols were used by Jesus when He spoke of the new Israel which He founded, namely, His Church. Herein we can see that Jesus was in the line of prophetic teaching. He demands from Christians an ideal standard of conduct and life. He insists with no uncertain voice

on a forgiving spirit as the test of the self-surrender which a Christian makes ; it maintains that union with Him and attachment to Him involved in baptism. He requires not an unethical forgiving-ness but forgiving-ness consonant with His moral law. We shall see this demand put before us from another angle by Hosea, the contemporary of Amos. In this other prophet the high standard demanded from Israel is indissolubly united with the love rather than the righteousness of Jehovah. With Jesus the Christian ideal is united with the righteous love of God as Father of all. The two prophets, in short, promulgated the principle that privilege meant responsibility towards God and man (Chapter XIII.).

Again, moral failures were abhorrent to God. He required justice and humane treatment in men's dealings with one another. He was not indifferent to the oppression of the poor, to their sufferings and their poverty, which it was man's duty to relieve. He demanded that judges should not sell justice, that merchants should not be dishonest, that the wealthy should not be selfish. So Christian justice requires recognition that the offender has some claims on the offended on the grounds of Christian humility and kindness. The forgiving spirit acknowledges that such claims are admitted. Further, the righteousness of God was not satisfied with the mere external observance of religion, however correct in ritual. The essence of true religion lay not in attendance at the sanctuaries, not in the payment of tithes, not in impressive ceremonial, not in the abundance of voluntary offerings, not in the appointment of temples, however valuable and helpful these were, but in seeking Him. "Seek ye me, and ye shall live," saith the LORD (v. 4).

Jehovah knew the secret of men's thoughts : ' He declareth unto man what is his thought ' (iv. 13). His wrath followed sinners, wherever they strove to hide themselves.

“ Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine
hand take them ;
And though they climb up to heaven, thence
will I bring them down :
And though they hide themselves in the top of
Carmel,
I will search and take them out thence ;
And though they be hid from my sight in the
bottom of the sea,
Thence will I command the serpent, and he
shall bite them :
And though they go into captivity before their
enemies,
Thence will I command the sword, and it shall
slay them :
And I will set mine eyes upon them for evil,
and not for good ” (ix. 2-4).

Israel was guilty of ingratitude. It was Jehovah, continued Amos, who guided their history, and gave them prophets and Nazirites to teach them His will (ii. 9 ff.). But the nation refused to hearken to His missionaries, and therefore retribution awaited them. He has set His eyes on them for evil and not for good. They failed to practise the plainest moral duties of human kindness, honesty, purity, and charity. They refused to heed His warnings of nature. He sent them five such warnings, famine, drought, blasting and mildew, pestil-

ence, and an earthquake, but to no purpose. Five times, after each reminder, does Amos repeat the pathetic refrain, " Yet have they not returned unto Me, saith the LORD " (iv. 6-11).

Amos also took a view which looked away from the particularism which believed that Jehovah was the God of Israel alone. God was the righteous Lord of other nations too, and He would visit His anger on them, not for offences against His own chosen race, but because they were guilty of breaking the ordinary laws of morality in their treatment of others than Israel. Thus the teaching of Amos was a tendency towards universalism, that salvation was possible for Jew and for Gentile. It gave a new sense of what the word " neighbour " might mean by not restricting it to an Israelite. If Israel thought that Jehovah knew them alone, Amos bade them to seek the LORD. Hosea, as we shall see, taught the other side of this call, that since God loved them, they must know Jehovah.

Yet Amos, stern though he is, finds it in his heart to intercede for the people.

" O Lord God, forgive, I beseech Thee :

How shall Jacob stand ? for he is small " (vii.
(2).

Once again he intercedes (vii. 5), but realises that the people will not repent. He knows God will forgive, if only the people will pursue after righteousness.

" Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live :

And so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be
with you, as ye say."

He has hopes that some will find mercy through following after that which is righteous, for he continues :

“ Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate :

It may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph ”
(v. 14, 15).

The “ sinners ” in the prophecy are the oppressors, the unjust judges, the immoral, and those who are guilty of unrighteousness. Sin is ethical, but none the less it is sin against God. The first stage of the restoration to fellowship of the whole nation is their destruction. Jehovah is true to His covenant even in His punishment of sinners. He is gracious in that He does not destroy them utterly, but gives them through captivity another chance of reformation.

Amos prophesied as a visitor to the northern kingdom, but in that kingdom there was a prophet from amongst them, one who looked with sympathy and affection on a sinful people and was by the strength of this compassion able to see another side of the character of Jehovah. This prophet was Hosea.

HOSEA.—His domestic experience was an unhappy one. His wife, Gomer, was depraved and faithless, but he ransomed her and hoped for her repentance and love. He loved her all through her infidelity. If he could love his wife so dearly, he argued, God must as dearly love His people, though they went after their lovers and forgot Him (ii. 13). He saw that God’s love for Israel was manifested in its history. He was as loving as He

was righteous. Israel had gone a-whoring and had ill-requited the love of God.

“ When Israel was a child, then I loved him,
And called my son out of Egypt.
As they called them, so they went from them :
They sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense
to graven images.
I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by
their arms ;
But they knew not that I healed them.
I drew them with cords of a man, with bands
of love :

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ?
How shall I deliver thee, Israel ? ” (xi. 1-4, 8).

Israel has repented, but her repentance has been spasmodic and superficial. They should have longed to know God. He has been constrained to punish them, for He delighteth in piety and not in sacrifice (vi. 1-6). It was dutiful love that God desired, love shown in acts of kindness to man. He wanted love to respond to His love. The bond between God and Israel was a moral one, and because the people were lacking in moral courage and in moral conduct, the LORD had a controversy with the inhabitants of the land ; there was no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land (iv. 1).

God as love.—Hosea's great discovery was that the highest attribute of God was not justice but love. His own experience with a wife who came of a class of woman whom his soul abhorred, but whom he loved intensely, was a reflection of the love of God, infinitely purer, infinitely wider, infinitely nobler than his own.

Hosea learned in bitterness of spirit the intensity of God's love for His creatures, and his love for God became the ruling principle of his life. He saw that the relationship between God and Israel was essentially a moral one. The fault with Israel was that they did not know God. "There is no knowledge of God in the land." They had lost their spiritual understanding. "The spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not the LORD" (v. 4). If they were to be faithful, they must know God. The LORD desired "the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (vi. 6). Hosea therefore called on them: "Let us know, let us follow on to know the LORD" (vi. 3). Then would come the ideal day of happiness, a second betrothal.

"I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness:

And thou shalt know the LORD" (ii. 20).

Hosea, in his concept of love, does not definitely refer to God's love as forgiving. The idea of forgiveness is, however, present, as we shall see.

In Hosea we come across a conception which is of fundamental importance not only for our immediate purpose, but in any study of religion. It is that of love (*hésed*). The circumstance that, in the prophecy, the love of God is said to be bestowed on Israel and no other nation does not make the prophet's use of the term less valuable, for not only does he define it as God's love for man, but includes in its meaning man's love for his fellow-Israelites; this a man does not because Jehovah loved him first, but as a condition of his sharing in the love of Jehovah. We may go further and say that the love of man for man must be like man's

love for God. That is to say, the word "love" in the prophecy means God's love for Israel, Israel's love for God, and man's love for man. When Hosea calls on Israel to know Jehovah, it is to know Him as a Father who made Ephraim to walk, taking them in His arms and drawing them with bands of love. And the love which God desires is a love like His and not the goodness (or *hésed*) which passes away as a morning cloud (vi. 4).

Amos does not use this significant word when he speaks of the need of kindly treatment of man by man, but Hosea does four times, first when he writes, "There is no truth, nor mercy (*hésed*), nor knowledge of God in the land" (iv. 1). Again, in the words, "For I desire *mercy*, and not sacrifice" (vi. 6), he means either man's love for God or man's love for man. The other two instances are "Sow to yourselves in righteousness and reap according to *mercy*" (x. 12), and "Keep *mercy* and judgment" (xii. 6), in both of which he is referring to men's moral duties to one another.

The English words in our Bible by which *hésed* is translated are kindness, goodness, and mercy—an indication that there is no one suitable English word which implies all that Hosea means. We have used the word "love" as its nearest equivalent. In the story of David and Jonathan it is translated "kindness" (1 Sam. xx. 14). But of more interest to us in the use of the word by Hosea is the thought of the family relationship between Jehovah and Israel. The word therefore may be said to foreshadow the doctrines of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, doctrines which are fundamental to any understanding of forgiveness.

The significance of Hosea's concept lies in his great discernment that the love of man for man cannot be separated from his love for God or God's love for him. The prophet thus anticipates our Lord's teaching of love in a remarkable way. He implies that if a man does not show love for his fellow-men it is because he has not experienced God's love for him or shown his love for God. Man should love his neighbour not because God loves him, but just as God loves him. Brotherly love is the essential condition for man's sharing in the love of God. In short, love for God and love for man are analogous. To know God is to love God and to love man. Now forgiveness is an aspect of love. Hence we may be justified in concluding that Hosea anticipated our Lord's teaching on the primary condition of forgiveness (Matt. vi. 14, 15).

Forgiveness.—In Hosea forgiveness includes not only restraint of anger and wrath, and the forbearance of punishment, but is also comparable to the love of God, a love which is unselfish and patient, a love which is so great that it is invincible.

“ How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ?
How shall I deliver thee, Israel ?

My heart is turned within Me,
My compassions are kindled together,
I will not execute the fierceness of My anger,
I will not return to destroy Ephraim :
For I am God, and not man ;
The Holy One in the midst of thee ” (xi. 8, 9).

Hosea knows that the people have encouraged one another to repentance, but that their repentance was

superficial. God is not satisfied with this shallow repentance which was like to an early dew which soon vanishes.

“ In their affliction they will seek me early,
Come and let us return unto the LORD :
He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.

· · · · ·
O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee ?
O Judah, what shall I do unto thee ?
For your goodness is as a morning cloud,
And as the early dew it goeth away ” (v. 15,
vi. 4).

Towards the close of his prophecy, Hosea's sympathy goes out to his people among whom he lives. There will be one more opportunity of repentance, for the LORD cannot bear the thought of His son's destruction.

“ I will ransom them from the power of the
grave ;
I will redeem them from death :
O death where are thy plagues ?
O grave, where is thy destruction ? ” (xiii. 14).

Hosea refers to one method of gaining forgiveness. It is the confession of sin.

“ O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God ;
For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
Take with you words, and return unto the LORD :
Say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously ” (xiv. 1-2).

God then responds to the message of the prophet,

“ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them
freely :

For mine anger is turned away from him.”

But, says Hosea in his concluding words, God’s plan for Israel is conditional. The ways of God are right, and, whilst the just shall walk in them, the transgressors shall fall therein (xiv. 9).

It will have been noticed that to both prophets Israel was the unit. The thoughts of God’s love for the individual and of individual responsibility were yet unperceived as a principle. It was Ephraim as a nation whom the Lord had taught to walk and, when weary, had carried in His arms. The God of love had cherished His son, but His love had not been returned. He still loved them, though He punished them.

MICAH is a prophet of forgiveness. He allows that sin must be punished ; “ Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks ” (ii. 3), but God promises forgiveness to the repentant (ii. 1–5, vi. 6 f.). And, at the close of his prophecy, Micah breaks forth into a wondrous lyrical poem of the goodness and mercy and forgiveness of God, which is as fine as any in religious literature, and shows a conception of forgiveness which is remarkable for the age and times in which he lived.

“ Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth
iniquity,

And passeth by the transgression of the remnant
of His heritage ?

He retaineth not His anger for ever,
Because He delighteth in mercy.

He will turn again, and have compassion upon us ;

He will tread our iniquities under foot :

And Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham,

Which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old " (vii. 18-20).

Micah does not fail to consider how men may gain forgiveness. One way is by an ethical change, a life of justice and mercy and humility. The people inquire how God may look favourably on them. Are they to bring presents and make obeisance ? Are they to multiply their offerings of calves and oil ? Are they to offer their most valuable possession, their first-born, for their sins ? To them Micah replies :

" He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ;
And what doth the LORD require of thee,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God ? " (vi. 6-8).

The second method is confession of sin. A true Israelite speaks,

" I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because
I have sinned against Him,
Until He plead my cause, and execute judgment
for me :
He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall
behold His righteousness " (vii. 9).

ISAIAH prophesied for nearly forty years in the southern kingdom. In his view, God was still the God not of the individual, but of the community. The sins against which Isaiah declaimed were still the sins of the community. The love and obedience which God sought was still that of the nation.

The Holiness of God.—The experience which revealed to Isaiah an aspect for God was the inaugural vision in the Temple about B.C. 740 (vi. 1-10). The vision is the key to the prophecies of Isaiah, and was probably due to fear of what might happen on the death of king Uzziah. In it, he saw the seraphim standing before God in the attitude of service and heard one cry to the other,

“ Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts :
The whole earth is full of His glory.”

God was Holy, “ the Holy One of Israel.” Holiness was the supreme attribute of God, His very essence. God alone was holy ; to Him alone was holiness to be assigned, and by its possession He was completely separated from all other divine beings and things. Holiness included all other attributes of God. Glory was a subsidiary attribute of the supreme holiness, a glory which filled the whole earth and was manifested in nature. Moral perfection, too, was an adjunct of this holiness, since it made the prophet perceive his own unworthiness and uncleanness. For as the Trisagion was being uttered, the house of the LORD was filled with smoke—a symbol of the reaction of God’s holy nature against sin. Immediately, the prophet’s conscience was roused, and such was God’s moral perfection that Isaiah saw his own uncleanness. “ Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of

unclean lips." He was not the only one unclean, for he perceived that all God's people were sinful and that he dwelt among a people of unclean lips. The prophet's confession of unworthiness resulted in his purification and forgiveness, freely bestowed by God. With a live coal from off the altar, one of the seraphim touched his mouth and said, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." The prophet was then worthy to act as the mouthpiece of God. Moral sensitiveness, we will agree, is necessary before we can experience forgiveness.

But what was to be the chief result of his mission? Not repentance and conversion, but spiritual insensibility, an incapacity to respond to the call of the Holy One. Amos wrote of the famine of the word of God as a calamity but Isaiah was to experience the abundance of the word as such. "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed"—words which are put into our Lord's mouth as being quoted by Him (Mark iv. 10-12). God's word in its fulness might result in the hardening of men's hearts.

The holiness of God therefore included not only glory and moral perfection, but also His control of the world of men and of nature. Sin was not only insensibility to the claims of moral righteousness, but also to the knowledge of God's ordering of the events of history.

The foreknowledge of the failure of the prophet's mission was literally fulfilled. The people would not respond to his appeal. They continued to be sceptical and indifferent to his summons to be a holy and righteous nation. Therefore he saw that for their sin disaster

awaited them. Yet the holiness of God would not permit the whole nation to perish. There would be a "remnant" who would escape the approaching doom: they would form the nucleus of a new Israel, they would be a "holy seed." They would be holy when the Lord "by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning" shall have cleansed them and washed away their impurities (iv. 3 f.).

If only Israel were obedient and willing, God would pour blessing on them. God, says Isaiah, is reasoning with them:

" Though your sins be as scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow ;
Though they be red like crimson,
They shall be as wool " (i. 18, 19).

But God's promise is conditional on the attitude of the sinner, for the prophet continues:

" If ye be willing and obedient,
Ye shall eat the good of the land :
But if ye refuse and rebel,
Ye shall be devoured with the sword :
For the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."

Sin and Forgiveness.—Isaiah is thus as stern as Amos in his warnings of judgment. Unlike Hosea, he hardly speaks of God's love, though thoughts of compassion and mercy are not wanting. Israel is His well-beloved for whom a song of the vineyard is sung (v. 1 ff.) ; God will wait that He may be gracious unto them (xxx. 18). Like Amos, Hosea, and Micah, Isaiah denounces the social evils of his day, the luxury of the rich, the abuse of justice, the indifference of the ruling classes to the poverty and misery of the poor, the spoliation of the

peasants. But he goes further than Amos and Micah in his analysis of the national sins, for he is conscious that the people sin not only in deed but in thought (v. 8-24). Sin is pride (ii. 11), sin is insensibility to what is divine (vi. 10). All the false ideals of God and His righteousness and all the corruption in national life are traced to their source, the absence of the knowledge of God. This is Hosea's view too, but Isaiah defines it more clearly; religious sensibility to know God is His chief requirement. True religion has to be cultivated. From His people God looks for the produce of the vineyard, but He looks in vain. The nation has not watered and cultivated the land. God on His part never fails. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" It is the nation that has failed. "When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, (why) brought it forth wild grapes?"

Isaiah thus lays down his views on the religious life. He may not have much to say on forgiveness, but he is aware that, unless a spirit of love is cultivated, love cannot exist as a moral experience of the religious life, that the more sensible a man is of the holiness of God, the more refined he is in the ordering of his inward spiritual life. A truly spiritual man is an expert gardener of the vineyard of his soul.

JEREMIAH was the first great prophet of the seventh century. The northern kingdom had fallen, and Judah was left as a nation and as the religious race. In Josiah's reign the discovery of a book of the Law wrought a temporary reformation in religion, but there was no moral amendment (B.C. 621). Ceremonial practices continued to be the chief means of worship. In vain

did the book of the Law call on the people to be holy as the LORD their God was holy.

Individual Religion.—Jeremiah had probably taken part in the reformation under Josiah. His career as a prophet was a disappointment to him, for his teaching and his warnings were unheeded. He felt he stood alone, forsaken by priests and people. His patriotism was suspected; he was ostracised. In his loneliness, he found comfort in personal communion. The LORD had made him "a defended city and an iron pillar, and brasen walls" against his oppressors, and had encouraged him with the assurance of His presence. "They shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee" (i. 18 f.). The isolation was a bitter experience to the prophet, but from it emerged the most significant contribution made by him to the conception of God. He learnt, what had never been grasped as a principle by human mind in the past, that God cared for each individual soul, that His love and mercy were not for Israel as a nation, but for each worthy Israelite as an individual, that communion with God was possible for each Israelite. Jeremiah therefore takes to God his troubles and problems and discusses them with Him. "Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with Thee: yet would I reason the cause with Thee. . . . But Thou, O LORD, knowest me; Thou seest me, and triest mine heart toward Thee" (xii. 1, 3). He knows God is with him, even when he is in the depths of despair. "But the LORD is with me as a mighty one and a terrible" (xx. 11). This conception of the individual's relationship with God led the prophet to dwell on the importance of the inner spiritual springs of action. Man must get behind the covenant at Horeb to the individual heart,

where lay the source of evil. God will make a new covenant. "I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (xxxii. 33).

This thought of the New Covenant was born in the year that Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon (B.C. 586). Out of the ruins of nationality, in the destruction of the Holy City and the Temple, rose the concept of individual religion.

Yet there is one important limitation to Jeremiah's great contribution. He would not allow that God cared for every man, Jew or Gentile. He would not say "love your enemies that ye may be sons of your heavenly Father." He would not agree that God in the present kingdom makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. v. 44 f.). He, as we shall see presently, could not forgive his enemies, but prayed for curses to fall on them.

That God cared for special individuals, was well known in history. Had not God cared for Abraham and Joseph, for Rachel and Hannah, for David and Solomon, for Elijah and for Elisha, and others in Israelite history? In the words, "Ye are the children of the LORD your God," Jehovah's Fatherhood of each individual Israelite was foreshadowed (Deut. i 31, viii. 5, xiv. 1). Again, Nathan was bidden by God to say to David: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart from him" (2 Sam. vii. 14 f.). That moral considerations entered into this individual relationship is as clear in *Jeremiah* as in *Exodus*, where the LORD says to Moses, "Whosoever hath sinned against

Me, him will I blot out of My book" (Ex. xxxii. 33), or in *Judges*, where God requites the wickedness of Abimelech (ix. 56).

Every worthy Israelite can enter into communion with God; his life can be one of constant communion with Him. The privilege enjoyed by Jeremiah is available for every Israelite. The individual is the religious unit, not the nation, family, or clan. The individual has taken the place hitherto held by a community. The old covenant has failed and a new covenant takes its place. God will write His law in each individual heart.

But if Jeremiah will not allow that God cares for each individual Gentile, he allows that God cares for the Gentiles collectively. "The nations shall bless themselves in the LORD, and in Him shall they glory" (iv. 2, cf. xii. 14, 15). It is an idea followed up by Ezekiel but by him associated not with God's favour but with His judgment. Israel alone will win salvation individually, the Gentiles will be punished as a body.

Sin.—If God cares for each individual Israelite it must naturally follow that each was responsible for his own sin. This conception of individual responsibility was the contribution of Ezekiel to religious thought. Jeremiah does not deal fully with this subject, though he realises it. Each one must purge himself of his sin. "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth; and I will pardon her" (v. 1).

Like Hosea and Isaiah, Jeremiah accuses Israel of spiritual indifference. "This people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God " (v. 23 f.). " They walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart " (vii. 24). Men can get into this as a habit and become incapable of conversion. " Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil " (xiii. 23). Only God can change men's hearts ; He alone can put His law in their inward parts and write it in their heart (xxxi. 33). When God so acts then will every one know Him from the least of them unto the greatest.

Knowing God is true religion, says Jeremiah, following in the wake of Hosea and Isaiah. " Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth " (ix. 24).

That the individual was now the unit of the religious life of Israel was not, however, the popular view, for the people had a proverb which Jeremiah controverted. " The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge " (xxxi. 29). Why should the children be held responsible for the sins of their fathers ? How could the children seek righteousness in such circumstances ? Is God's principle of government just ? Jeremiah at one time agreed that such was the divine purpose, that children must suffer for the sins of past generations. " I will cause them to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah " (xv. 4). But the prophet's own experience compelled him to change his view. He saw that the old idea that God would only deal with the nation as a whole made havoc of faith,

that his need of God was personal, that his own loyalty and his own obedience to a God who had made His will known to himself was inconsistent with the old view. The individual Israelite was not involved in the sins of his fathers; the individual Israelite could enter into personal communion with God, and God entered into communion with him.

Consonant with this view of God's interest in each individual, sin, in the prophet's view, is not national but a matter of personal religion. Now Isaiah had defined sin as rebellion. This is too harsh a word for Jeremiah. It lacks, what we may call, the personal touch with which the prophet is so closely concerned, for it is with the thought of family relationships that he makes Judah say to God, "My father, Thou art the guide of my youth" (iii. 4). Perhaps the best word to define Jeremiah's conception of sin is "ingratitude." God has cared for Israel throughout their history, and the prophet, conscious of this care, thinks of it in terms of family life. "Thus saith the LORD, I remember concerning thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (ii. 2).

Forgiveness.—The prophet's view of divine forgiveness varies with the national fortunes. In the early days of his career as a prophet, namely, in the days of the reformation under Josiah and its failure, he despairs of the people. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (xiii. 23). No man repenteth him of his wickedness, he writes; all make professions of loyalty and act a lie. "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and

seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon her" (v. 1 and *vide* p. 46). The people have no desire to repent and the LORD must therefore punish. "Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of My sight and let them go forth" (xv. 1).

But, as the fall of the nation becomes imminent, the prophet's mood changes. Sin, as ingratitude, will cease. Forgiveness, after repentance (vii. 2-3), will be followed by gratitude, and gratitude by service. "I will be their God, and they shall be My people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (xxx. 33, 34).

Human Forgiveness.—Yet there is one trait in Jeremiah's life which shows conclusively how far his teaching on forgiveness was from that of Jesus Christ. He has no idea of the duty of forgiving his enemies. In fact, Jeremiah, who discovered the secret of inner religion in men's dealings with God, takes a positive delight in calling down vengeance on his enemies. We may say that there is no place for human forgiveness in the teaching of the prophet. He prays to God for vengeance against his kinsmen. "O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see Thy vengeance on them" (xi. 20). When he is in the depths of misery and regrets that he was born, he again turns to prayer for comfort, but his prayer opens with a cry for vengeance. "O LORD, Thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and avenge me of my

persecutors" (xv. 15). He reiterates his desire in another prayer. "Let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction" (xvii. 18). His hatred has no bounds when he once more prays, "Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from Thy sight: but let them be overthrown before Thee; deal Thou with them in the time of Thine anger" (xviii. 23).

EZEKIEL.—The fall of Jerusalem was followed by the exile. Amongst those who shared in the captivity in Babylon was Ezekiel, a contemporary and probably a disciple of Jeremiah.

The chief concern of Ezekiel is with principles rather than with the course of events. Like Jeremiah, he sympathises with God's anger, and, like him, he intercedes for his people, but his intercession is of no avail, for God has found no righteous man in Israel (iii. 7, ix. 5, xxii. 30). The sin of Israel is universal, and the time for intercession is past. Ezekiel's hope is therefore in a future ideal kingdom which will be set up by God for "His name's sake."

Ezekiel makes no special contribution to the knowledge of God over and above that of the prophets who went before him; instead, he brings his mind to bear on some of the problems which puzzled the captives in Babylon. But he combats one point in the prevailing conception of God, that He is the author of good and evil. He makes man responsible for his choice of evil. His argument is as follows. It is God who lays a stumbling-block over which a righteous man who has become a sinner falls, and thus it is He who adds sin to sin. The man "shall die in his sin, and his righteous

deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered" (iii' 20). Israel must remember that it was God who gave Israel statutes and judgments "which if a man do he shall live in them" (xx. 11); yet, on the other hand, it must be admitted, continues Ezekiel, that it is He who also gave them "statutes that were not good, and judgments wherein they should not live" (xx. 25). But though God puts evil in the way, the nation is responsible for the evil they do; "they have taken their idols into their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face" (xiv. 3). God in this way adds to the sins of a sinful race. If He, continues Ezekiel, permits evil and gives statutes and judgments which are not good, His purpose is to destroy evil in order that people may know that He is the LORD (vi. 7).

Individual Responsibility.—Ezekiel in his capacity as watchman has to prepare the nation for the ideal kingdom of the future. He has to call each individual to repentance and to righteousness, for life in that kingdom is essentially moral. Ezekiel, like his teacher Jeremiah, is a prophet of individualism, and in individual responsibility he finds the solution of the problem which troubles Israel in exile, as it troubled Israel before the exile—"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." He argues that no one perishes for the sins of others. "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (xviii. 1-4). The individual soul does not suffer for the sin of past generations.

Thus Ezekiel's greatest contribution to religion is the doctrine of individual responsibility. Jeremiah had

realised that each individual could have communion with God, Ezekiel realises a complementary truth that each individual is responsible to God for his own sin.

Forgiveness.—This principle raised a second problem. In the popular mind there was a close connexion between man's external condition and God's forgiveness. It was universally believed that signs of prosperity were signs of God's favour, and that suffering and defeat were signs of His unforgiving spirit. And the people were suffering all the time. They therefore now argued that if they were not suffering for the sins of their forefathers, they were suffering for their own sins. "Why then live?" they asked (xxxiii. 10). They had no idea of what we call secondary causes, for everything was the act of God. Ezekiel's answer is that God's omnipotence is not seen only in victory, but also in defeat. If Judah is being punished, it is the due reward of their sin. Yet He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; His mind is that men should return from their evil ways and live (xviii. 23). "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them" (xxxvi. 26 f.). The LORD by His very nature cannot destroy His people. He wrought their redemption in the past for His own name's sake; the knowledge of Him is united with the destinies of Israel. As His people gradually understood history, they would learn more of Him and of His moral rule in the world (xxxix. 23). God is revealing Himself in History.

Ezekiel therefore lays down the principle that men are not involved in the fate or the sins of their fore-

fathers. Not one dies for the sins of others. Each individual is responsible for his own sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Each individual soul is God's, and God has direct relations with each. On this relationship depends the future of each man (xviii. 4). If he is faithful to God, the past need not affect his spiritual life with God. Each man must act righteously, be just, and do what is lawful and right—for example, in his devotions, in his dealings with men and women, in his social life. The man who thus walks in His statutes and judgments shall live.

Ezekiel does not mean that works alone suffice, for he puts into God's mouth a call to repentance. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (xviii. 31). Neither does Ezekiel in using the terms "life" and "death" limit their meaning to literal life and death. He has always in view an ideal kingdom of the future and the spiritual condition of the individual in it.

Moral Freedom.—The passage just quoted is an instance of another principle which the prophet enunciates, namely, that of moral freedom. He is aware that in many cases the sins of the fathers are visited on the children, that children inherit ills and maladies through the sins of their parents, that in these cases it may seem that God has neither forgiven nor forgotten. But he is not dealing with these external matters, but with the spiritual relationship between God and the individual. Each man is morally free to rise above these external consequences and have direct and unbroken relationship with God. Each man can break with his past, can choose to live with God; every man can repent and have a new heart and a

new spirit. The moral freedom given by God to men enables each man to choose between life and death, between good and evil. A righteous man can choose to become a sinner, and a sinner can choose to become righteous. The people are not to despair about themselves or about God's pardon. A man's past will not be raised up against him. He is assured of gaining God's forgiveness. If a man repents and turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, he shall not die but live. "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him" (xxxiii. 16). God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (xxxiii. 11). The past is not irrevocable. The people were not to think that the calamities and sufferings being borne by them closed God's mercy. There was a future of hope for every man.

When Ezekiel speaks of moral freedom, he does not mean that man has to rely on his own efforts. God will help him and give him a sensitive heart of flesh instead of a stony heart. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (xxxvi. 25-27). The redemptive process in the new kingdom of the future is thus described in three stages, forgiveness (ver. 25), regeneration (ver. 26), the spirit of God in man (ver. 27). Forgiveness is essential to the new life. To us Christians, the spirit of God is the Holy Spirit. We are reminded of St. Paul's words : " For the mind of the

flesh is death ; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace. . . . But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you " (Rom. viii. 5-11).

The SECOND ISAIAH is the name given to the unknown prophet whose writings are to be seen in the greater part of chapters xl.-lxvi. of our present Isaiah. He is a man of remarkable spiritual perception, for he seems to penetrate into the mind of God, to identify himself with God, and to understand the redemptive purposes of God, as no other prophet has done. Further, he realises in its fullness the sin of the nation, and has it in his power not only to grasp the iniquity of it all, but to sympathise with the people in their distress of thought that they were being punished doubly for their sins. This wonderful gift which the prophet possessed is particularly shown in the last of the great Servant Songs in which the thoughts of Jehovah and of the nation are blended in a poem of deepest beauty which has transfigured suffering and brought comfort and assurance to the human heart.

The conception of God which has possessed this prophet is that of Him as the Redeemer. Over and over again he speaks of Jehovah as Redeemer and Saviour. The Redeemer is the Holy One, the Lord of Hosts, our Father, and as Saviour there is no other beside Him. In Jehovah, the God of Redemption, the prophet sees love, compassion, and mercy manifested to Israel. No other prophet expresses as this prophet does the love of Jehovah for His people. He carries on the thought of Hosea and surpasses him in the brilliance of his analysis of the divine love with which Jehovah had surrounded

Israel even though Israel had been a "transgressor from the womb." It was everlasting love (liv. 8), and "Israel shall be saved with everlasting salvation" (xlv. 17) to make Himself an everlasting name (lxiii. 12). Jehovah cannot forsake Israel or forget them. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee" (xlix. 15). His kindness will never depart from Israel, though mountains and hills cease to be (liv. 10). Thus the love of Jehovah is everlasting and unchanging. His love is also full of compassion and mercy for "in all their affliction he was afflicted . . . and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (lxiii. 9). His anger may have been manifested towards Israel, but it was only temporary, "In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment" (liv. 8). Even when He chastised He loved His people, for the spirit should fail before Him and the souls which He had made (lvii. 16). He could not continue in His anger for that would utterly destroy mankind; therefore when chastisement has produced contrition, Jehovah will show mercy.

Because of this wonderful redemptive love shown to Israel of Jehovah's grace, Israel in return has a redemptive mission to the world (lxi. 5).

The Second Isaiah does not say that Jehovah loves all nations or redeems them, but he looks forward to His sovereignty being extended towards all men (xlii. 10, li. 5), when nations shall come to the light of Zion, and kings to the brightness of its rising (lx. 3).

This unknown prophet has been rightly described as the prophet of comfort, and it is with words of cheer and encouragement that he opens his prophecy. In

later passages the condition of mind of the exiles at the time the comforting message is delivered, is described as that of being blind and deaf (xlii. 19). Yet, in spite of their sins, in spite of their wearying Him with their iniquities, God will redeem them. God had punished them to show that, if they suffered double for their sins, they were also suffering for the sins of other nations. God now bids every one to repent and come to Him, for His forgiveness is abundant.

“ Seek ye the LORD while He may be found,
Call ye upon Him while he is near :
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts ;
And let him return unto the LORD, and He will
have mercy upon him ;
And to our God, for He will abundantly
pardon ” (lv. 6, 7).

Again, in another passage, the prophet puts into the mouth of God these words :

“ Fear not ; for I have redeemed thee ;
I have called thee by thy name ; thou art Mine.
When thou passest through the waters, I will
be with thee ;
And through the rivers, they shall not overflow
thee :
When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt
not be burned ;
Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ”
(xliii. 1, 2).

Forgiveness is an act of the free grace of God. He Himself takes the first step in the work of redemption.

He does it "for His own sake" and not for any merit of Israel.

"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake,
And I will not remember thy sins" (xliii. 25).

How the experience of forgiveness brings happiness is strikingly illustrated in a song of praise. Israel obtains forgiveness from God through faith after repentance and a turning to God.

"Sing, O ye heavens, for the LORD hath done it ;
Shout, ye lower parts of the earth ;
Break forth into singing, ye mountains,
O forest, and every tree therein :
For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob,
And will glorify Himself in Israel" (xliv. 23).

With a deepening conception of God has come a deepening sense of men's unworthiness and sin and of the free forgiveness of God. But forgiveness is for Israel only.

Had the knowledge of sin and forgiveness ended here, it would have brought consolation, but it would not have revealed what the sin of Israel cost God. Isaiah is conscious of this and therefore pictures, under the form of an ideal man, the Suffering Servant by whom Israel wins redemption through suffering.

"Surely He hath borne our griefs,
And carried our sorrows :
Yet we did esteem Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities ;
The chastisement of our peace was upon Him ;
And with His stripes we are healed " (liii. 4, 5).

The prophet thus prepared mankind for the Incarnation and the Atonement of the Son of God.

The great prophets, with the exception of Hosea and Jeremiah, give us hardly any information about their own readiness to bestow forgiveness on others. We saw one spirit in Hosea, and a contrary spirit in Jeremiah. We saw in Jeremiah that personal resentment and the bitterest of feelings were held not to be incompatible with the principle of individual religion. Further information, however, is forthcoming from the Poetical Books and from the Priestly Code, and in them we find that the problem of the forgiveness of others is in some measure dealt with. We find two contradictory series of passages, one in harmony with the view of Jeremiah, the other in line with the teaching of Hosea, but the tendency of the passages as a whole is in agreement with our Lord's dictum, "ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy" (Matt. v. 43). They are found with other ideas which bear on our subject, and in particular with descriptions of the joy of forgiveness.

The highest conception of the duty and meaning of human forgiveness is given in the PRIESTLY CODE. We have already mentioned that it is in this Code that we find reference to a class of sins, called sins done with a high hand, for which no atonement was possible (page 26). But it is also in this Code that we discover the highest

view of human forgiveness, though the regulation is confined, as in the Mosaic covenant, to Israelites or to strangers who had bound themselves to observe the Law. In this precept certain things are forbidden, namely, hatred, vengeance, the incurring of guilt through cherishing hatred, and the cherishing of ill-will; and certain things are enjoined, namely, rebuke of the wrong-doer, and in particular "to love thy neighbour as thyself." In this passage, therefore, we have the high-water mark of teaching on human forgiveness in the Old Testament. Jesus transformed it by giving it a universal application.

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart : thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbour, and not bear sin because of him. Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself " (Lev. xix. 17, 18).

THE PROVERBS teaches aspects of human forgiveness which show some sense of the relationship between God's loving-kindness towards us and our kindly treatment of our neighbours. Only in one passage do we come across words which are grounded on an ethical view which is ignoble and unworthy, though the first two lines of the passage say quite clearly that vindictive joy over an enemy's fall is unethical.

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth,
And let not thine heart be glad when he is
overthrown :
Lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him,
And He turn away His wrath from him "
(xxiv. 17, 18).

The proverb therefore advises men not to rejoice over the discomfiture of the enemy lest God see the malicious joy and so turn His wrath away from the enemy !

But in other passages there is a finer strain. For example,

“ Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me ;

I will tender to the man according to his work ”
(xxiv. 29) ;

and again, “ Say not thou, I will recompense evil ”
(xx. 22). To these must be added a notable passage which is quoted by St. Paul (Rom. xii. 20) :

“ If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat ;
If he be thirsty, give him water to drink ;
For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head,
And the LORD shall reward thee ” (xxv. 21, 22).

THE BOOK OF JOB is a poem in which Job and his friends discuss the problem of pain and suffering. The friends adopt the current view that suffering is the punishment of sin, whilst Job contradicts it. He is convinced that the orthodox doctrine of retribution does not hold in his case, and that however sore his afflictions he would not “ renounce God and die.”

If, then, the friends feel that suffering is the result of sin, how do they suggest that Job may gain restoration of his losses ? It is by repentance and prayer, says Zophar.

“ If thou set thine heart aright,
And stretch out thine hands toward Him ;
If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away,
And let not unrighteousness dwell in thy tents ;

Surely then shalt thou lift up thy face without
spot ;
Yea, thou shalt be steadfast and shalt not fear ;
For thou shalt forget thy misery ;
Thou shalt remember it as waters that are
passed away " (xi. 13-16).

Perhaps Job has been guilty of dishonourable conduct to men, and God was wroth with him ? This argument Job will not allow, though there might be a connexion between a man's treatment of his fellow-men and his treatment of God.

" If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that
hated me,
Or lifted up myself when evil found him ;
Yea, I suffered not my mouth to sin
By asking his life with a curse " (xxx. 29, 30).

Job was considerate and patient with men, as his three disputants might have inferred by his attitude towards them when they invented crimes and charged Job with them.

Thus in this book we find indications of a high sense of duty towards men and the possession of a forgiving spirit in a God-fearing man.

The Epilogue tells us of the end of the discussion and of the vindication of Job's faith. It was against the three friends and not against Job that God's anger was kindled. They had not spoken right, as Job had done in denying that suffering was always the punishment of sin. The friends had sinned, and were promised forgiveness when they had sacrificed and when Job had made intercession for them.

“ And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Now, therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly.” The result of the intercession is given us. “ The LORD accepted Job, and the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before ” (xlii. 7-10).

THE PSALMS cover several centuries of Israelite history, therefore we may end our survey with a general conspectus of their teaching.

The conception of God includes every one of the characteristics referred to by the prophets. He is the Creator, the righteous Judge, the King, the Holy One of Israel, the Living God, the good Shepherd and the Rock, but though Israel is God's people, and God pities them like a father his children, He is never directly spoken of as their Father. His loving-kindness finds frequent mention, but He is never thought of as Love.

The stern aspect of God's character is also in evidence. His vindictive spirit will fall on evil doers, who “ shall be rooted out of the land of the living ” (lii. 5). He will cause any evil planned by men against an Israelite to fall on their own heads, for He has promised to deliver him (liv. 5). Persistent sinning

will be punished but it has its purpose ; it is so that a man shall say,

“ Verily there is a reward for the righteous :
Verily He is a God that judgeth the earth ”
(lviii. 11).

Vengeance is God’s prerogative (xviii. 47, xciv. 1) for He must vindicate His holiness.

“ Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God :
Thou wast a God that forgavest them,
Though thou tookest vengeance of their doings ”
(xcix. 8).

Sins are recognised as common to all men. The sins of youth are mainly thoughtless (xxv. 7) ; there are also sins of inadvertence or errors, secret sins, and presumptuous sins. For secret sins and errors the Psalmist knows he may win forgiveness, but, as the law provided no remedy for wilful presumptuous sins, he prays for protection ; then will he be upright and innocent of the great sin of apostasy.

“ Who can discern his errors ?
Clear Thou me from hidden faults.
Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous
sins :
Let them not have dominion over me : then
shall I be perfect,
And I shall be clear from great transgression ”
(xix. 12, 13).

Forgiveness.—Repentance and confession are conditions of forgiveness, but the heart must be sincere and

man must be conscious of sin in himself. There should be "no guile in his spirit" when he confesses :

"I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the
LORD ;
And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin "
(xxxii. 5).

The composer of Psalm li., be he David or not, seems to realise the Christian principle that a sin against man is a sin against God.

"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,
And done that which is evil in Thy sight " (li. 4).

What can make men repent ? Many answers are to be found. The Penitential Psalms (vi., xxxii., xxxviii., li., cii., cxxx., cxliii.) recall the mercy of God and His promise to be favourable to His chosen people, and within this comforting thought the penitents are urged to plead for His mercy to deliver them from their continuous suffering and mental distress (vi. 1-6 ; xxxviii. 8). Others oppressed with loneliness, loss of health, loss of appetite, and the mockery of enemies (cii. 2, 4-8), pray for a speedy answer from God. The sorrows of the Exile are present in a few of the Psalms, and cause many to turn to God for mercy.

Forgiveness is possible after repentance and confession, for

"The LORD is full of compassion and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plentous in mercy " (ciii. 8).

He will blot out sin as a recorded debt is cancelled,

or as a thing washed away, or as a cleansing from leprosy.

“ Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness :

According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,

And cleanse me from my sin ” (li. 1, 2).

He will take away the burden of sin, and cover it so that a judge may not see and punish (xxxii. 1).

The underlying motive in these longings for forgiveness is that of the Old Testament. It is not love but fear ; no one can stand as innocent before God in judgment. If God should “ be extreme to mark what is done amiss ” every one will stand condemned, but God does forgive that men may fear Him.

“ If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,

O Lord, who shall stand ?

But there is forgiveness with Thee,

That Thou mayest be feared ” (cxxx. 3, 4).

In one particular, the hymn-book of the ages is unrivalled. The joys of forgiveness are unfolded to our minds and hearts in at least three of the Psalms.

Psalm xxxii, the favourite of St. Augustine, begins with a beatitude,

“ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

Blessèd is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,

And in whose spirit there is no guile.”

Psalm c. calls on men "to enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise" :

" For the LORD is good ; His mercy endureth for ever."

The height of joy comes in Psalm ciii. It is the result of a higher perception of His character :

" The LORD is full of compassion and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
He will not always chide ;
Neither will He keep His anger for ever.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewardeth us after our iniquities.
For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward them that fear
Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath He removed our transgressions from
us.
Like as a father pitieth his children,
So the LORD pitieth them that fear Him."

With such a God whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, Israel may well sing,

" Bless the LORD, O my soul ;
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits :
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities : "

Human Forgiveness.—Our Lord had knowledge that it was said to them of old, " Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy " (Matt. v. 43). This vindictive spirit against enemies and oppressors is mani-

festes in many a Psalm (xli., lviii., lxix., lxxix., civ., cix., cxxxvii., cxliii.). The language sometimes is hateful, particularly when the desire for destruction, not only of the offender but also of his family, his wife, and his children, is embedded in a prayer. Israel finds joy in the misery of his enemies, asks that they might be blotted out of the book of the living, prays that the vengeance of God may fall with utmost fury on them so that the people of God may bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked. Often, it may be, this vindictiveness was due to zeal for God's cause ; it may be that it was not always personal, but we must conclude that to many a righteous Israelite there was no virtue in forgiving nor was there a necessity to forgive. Evidently it did not make for righteousness, if the sojourner in the tabernacle, the dweller in the holy hill, he who walked in his integrity, and the man with a perfect heart, even when they sum up the virtues which make for godliness, can find no place in their religion for the spirit which might lead them to love their enemies and to do good to those that hate them (xv., xxvi., ci.). The *Psalms* falls far behind the *Proverbs* in its teaching on forgiveness of others.

SUMMARY.

We may sum up the prophetic teaching on forgiveness thus. 1. Every aspect of God received detailed consideration except the very essential ones of His Fatherhood and His Love. As a result, there is not that elaboration of the contents and scope of forgiveness that we find in the teaching of our Lord. The idea of forgiveness in the Old Testament is the same as in the New, but there is a richness and grandeur in the latter that is not so deeply perceived in the former.

Forgiveness is an act of grace by which Jehovah restores the nation or the individual to that state of fellowship which had been destroyed by sin. Forgiveness is a restoration of communion. Punishment may be imposed on sinners or on a sinful nation, but its purpose is remedial, so much so that psalmists can feel and express the joy of forgiveness and can realise that the fear of punishment can be overcome by the joy of restoration to communion ; Job sees it as a " redemption of the soul from going down into the pit " (Job xxxiii. 28). Forgiveness is not condoning of sin or any ignoring of it by Jehovah. The God of Israel loves even when He chastises.

In the view of the prophets all sin can be forgiven, but the Priestly Code allows that only unintentional sin can be atoned for by sacrifice. Wilful deliberate sin can never gain forgiveness by sacrifices and a strict ritual.

Prophets and Priests agree that the forgiveness given by Jehovah is conditional. They not only state this fact, but it is implied in the contexts in which the words expressing the idea of forgiveness occur, such as the symbol of " covering " sin. This condition is repentance which includes sorrow for the wrong-doing, confession, and at least, an intention to amend.

In the sacrificial system of the Code, amendment is made by the prescribed sacrifices.

Divine forgiveness is complete restoration to communion for the sin is remembered no more and is removed " as far as the east is from the west." The tension between offender and offended has ceased. Jehovah, as the source of forgiveness and as the only Forgiver, destroys this sense of restraint when He forgives. This is not to be confounded with the memory and consciousness of the guilt of sin which man may retain.

Thus at the close of the Old Testament a truer view of the character of God has brought about a clearer view of forgiveness than was held when the covenant was made on Mount Sinai.

Forgiveness thus is freely bestowed and brings happiness and communion. But God has only redeemed Israel. Even the Second Isaiah does not say that Jehovah loves all nations and will redeem mankind. It is the same with Jonah, who is constrained to preach to the Gentiles in Nineveh, but his Jewish training made him resent God's loving-kindness to the heathen. He expostulated with God and felt that he did well to be angry even unto death (Jonah iv.).

The chief motive for seeking forgiveness is not love, but fear. Yet we must not be blind to the thought that there was in the emphasis on the severity of God a preparation for our Lord's own revelation. However much Jesus laid emphasis on the love of God, He did not overlook God's wrath with sin and with selfishness. The God revealed by His Son was not sentimental, not a God who looked lightly on sin.

As regards man's forgiveness of man, there is not that emphasis laid which we find in the teaching of the New Testament. But the teaching of man's love for his neighbour, though this duty only related to Israelites, and the concept of love in Hosea laid the foundation for the fuller teaching of our Lord that for divine forgiveness there must be a forgiving spirit in addition to repentance, and that this new condition of human forgiveness was primary. It is in this insistence on forgiving all men, even our enemies, that Jesus made a revolutionary change in His teaching on God's forgiveness of man.

CHAPTER III

BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

THE period under review is one in which, after the domination of the Persian Empire had ceased, Palestine came under the sway of Greek culture in politics, theology, philosophy, ethics, and literature. This gradual assimilation of Greek thought and practice is known as the Hellenistic movement, but it was not effected without a struggle, of which the Books of Maccabees give us information. The revolt was the outcome of the aim of Antiochus Epiphanes to hellenise the Jews, and in this revolt the common people fought for the orthodox party. But the struggle did not raise an impenetrable barrier against the Hellenistic movement, for the latter found support in a strong party in Palestine and amongst the Jews of the Dispersion. This liberal party became known as the Sadducees, whilst the orthodox party were in the century before Christ called the Pharisees. The bitterness between these two parties became acute after the subjugation of the Jews by Rome (63 B.C.), and found expression in the *Psalms of Solomon* where the imprecations against the Sadducees are venomous and painful and amount to the sum total of those imprecations which are found in the *Psalms* of the Old Testament.

Amongst the results of the Hellenistic movement, we may reckon four points which are of interest for our immediate study. The Hebrew Bible was translated

into Greek and gave us the Septuagint, the value of which was enhanced by the inclusion of the Apocrypha. This Greek version of the Old Testament was the Bible of the Jews who were scattered abroad throughout the world, and of the Greek-speaking Christian world. Again, the individual Jew, by being recognised as a political unit and by being given a recognised place in community life, saw a new meaning of individual ethical responsibility. Hitherto, through the teaching of Jeremiah and Ezekiel he had learned that each individual could be in communion with God and was responsible for his own sin, but now he learned through the recognition of his political status the meaning of his responsibility toward others, whether Jew or Gentile. This widened sense of the duty towards his neighbour and of the forgiveness of his neighbour is prominently taught in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Thirdly, their conceptions of God, their views of immortality, of angelology and the Messianic hope were enlarged. The Jew began to speculate, and the subjects of their speculations included that on the origin of sin. Lastly, the tendency to universalism which was noted in the Second Isaiah was strengthened and encouraged. It was realised better than before that salvation was possible for Gentile as well as Jew. Particularism was ceasing to be a tenet.

When we turn to the people themselves, the particularistic and universalistic tendencies, referred to above, in course of time came into conflict. For not all the Jews were favourable to the Hellenistic movement. There were Jews known as the *Chassidim* who, after the days of the Maccabees, became bigoted and orthodox, and developed into the sect known as the Pharisees. To them the Law and oral tradition were equally

important. Opposed to the Pharisees, who formed a minority of the people, the rich high-priestly party became known as the Sadducees. These latter held that only the written Law was of binding value, and that the oral expansion of the Law to which the Pharisees attached importance was of little moment. The great majority of the people were neither Pharisaic nor Sadducean ; their primary interest was in the Apocalyptic Literature. The Apocalyptists, like the prophets, spoke to the people and particularly about the world to come. They, too, were loyal to the Law but did not accept the rigid interpretation placed on it by the Pharisees. In their attitude to the world they were universalists rather than particularists.

The Pharisee and the Sadducee were theologically apart. To the oral developments of the Law the party of the Sadducees were opposed ; to the Pharisees the oral expansion was as inspired as the written Law. For example, in *Jubilees* the Law, whether written or unwritten, was of eternal validity and was given by the mediation of angels (cf. Acts vii. 53, Gal. iii. 19). One of the striking views of this same book is that ethics is held not to be a matter of external conduct only, but of holiness and inward purity too.

Of special interest to us is the ethical outlook of those who were leaders of the people in the days before Jesus lived on earth. We find the animosity between the two leading parties of religion receding into the background, the existence of a belief amongst some Pharisees that the coming kingdom will be of a spiritual character, and amongst others that redemption rested on the Law and the works of the Law ; there were some who, while they revered the Law, were dissatisfied with it as a means of

redemption, and believed that salvation was through faith; and lastly, some who overemphasised the importance of ceremonial ordinances.

The period between the Testaments was one in which new thoughts of duty, new hopes of the future, and new conceptions of ethics made their impact felt in Israel. The Jewish people was being prepared for a restatement of ideas, but based on their Scriptures and a renewed study of them.

Thus, though prophecy had ceased, the voice of God was not silent. He spoke through the scribes, through thinkers, and through apocalyptists. But before we proceed with our subject, a few words must be said on the literature of this period, which may be divided into two groups, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The former are often bound up with our Bibles, and are fairly well known to most readers. These books were held to be orthodox by the Jews.

The Pseudepigrapha were regarded as heretical by the Jews and, therefore, were rejected. Strange to say, the wonderful teaching on forgiveness is to be found in this group of books. Their titles are false, for they were written under assumed names. The reason for this is interesting. After the Law was written about 400 B.C., and prophecy had ceased, if a man wished his books to be read, the only possible method was to ascribe his writings to men who lived before 400 B.C. Hence books were ascribed to Enoch, Abraham, the twelve Patriarchs, Moses, etc. The titles are no guide to authorship. It is not to be assumed that the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs was written by the twelve sons of Jacob, or that the Book of Enoch was written by Enoch, the seventh from Adam (cf. Jude 12).

The Pseudepigrapha were popular books and we are bound to turn to them for information on religious thought "between the Testaments." Some of them were certainly known to our Lord. They are particularly valuable for the two centuries immediately preceding our Lord's birth. The Book of Daniel is one of the Pseudepigrapha.

All this literature will not be used by us in the quotations we make. As the books are not well known to most people, we give a list of those to which reference is made, together with their abbreviations. The translations are taken from Dr. Charles's *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*.

The Book of Jubilees (Jub.).

1 Enoch (1 En.).

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (T. Reu. for the Testament of Reuben ; T. G. for the Testament of Gad, etc.).

The Assumption of Moses (Ass. Mos.).

The Sibylline Oracles (Sib.).

The Secrets of Enoch (2 En.).

4 Ezra (4 Ez.).

The Psalms of Solomon (Ps. Sol.).

4 Maccabees (4 Macc.).

Fragments of a Zadokite work (Zad.).

The Apocalypse of Moses (Apoc. Mos.).

The Second Book of Baruch (2 Bar.).

The literature of the period is the link which joins the Old Testament to the New. It introduces us to many of the thoughts and ideas and hopes of the people amongst whom Jesus lived. Without it, for example, we should not have known current views of the kingdom of heaven, which John the Baptist and Jesus speak of as if well known.

THE CONCEPTION OF GOD.

The prophets had made God known as the Creator and the Father, a God of holiness, love, mercy, and righteousness. The legalists had seen Him mainly as the Giver of the Law and the God of the Covenant. One school of writers had tried to teach His nearness to man, another school had developed the thought of Him as transcendent. All these ideas of God are to be found in the literature of this period, though the legalist and transcendent views predominated. Before we call attention to them, a curious phenomenon must be noted. The first book of Maccabees never uses the term "God," but speaks of "heaven," a reverential synonym, or refers to Him by a pronoun. The reason for this silence is not certain. It may have been due to the fact that piety was mechanically conceived, or that God, being transcendent, was held to be beyond human reach.

It is the transcendent God who is suggested by many of the titles given to Him. Let us collect a few from *Judith*. We find "the Lord Almighty," "the God of Israel," "Lord God of heaven," "Lord of the heavens and of the earth," "Creator of the waters," "King of every creature," "the God of all power and might," "Most High God." Elsewhere, we find God spoken of as "The Holy and Great One, the Head of Days," the "heavenly God," "the King of Kings," "the Lord of Spirits," "the Everlasting King," etc.

He is also very specially, as in the Old Testament, the Father of Israel, but broader views were coming forward. He is more than that, He is Father of all men. We read in the *Apocalypse of Moses*, "Pardon him, Father of all, for he is Thine image . . . the

invisible Father, even our God " (xxxv. 2 f.), and in *The Sibylline Oracles*, " The immortal Father of gods and of all men " (iii. 278).

He is spirit, though anthropomorphic language is often used to describe Him. " And the Great Glory sat thereon, and His raiment shone more brightly than the sun and was whiter than any snow. None of the angels could enter and could behold His face by reason of the magnificence and glory, and no flesh could behold Him " (1 En. xiv. 20 f.).

He is just. " For He is the living God, and He is holy and faithful, and He is righteous beyond all, and there is with Him no accepting of (men's) persons and no accepting of gifts ; for God is righteous, and executeth judgment on all those who transgress His commandments and despise His covenant " (Jub. xxi. 4).

He loves all He has created. His love is shown towards those who fast and practise purity. " For God loveth him who in a den of wickedness combines fasting with chastity, rather than the man who in kings' chambers combines luxury with licence " (T. Jos. ix. 2). He loves those who are righteous.

" And he shall not suffer unrighteousness to lodge
any more in their midst,
Nor shall there dwell with them any man that
knoweth wickedness,
For he shall know then, that they are all sons
of their God " (Ps. Sol. xvii. 29 f.).

God is long-suffering towards all, gracious and true.

" But Thou, our God, art gracious and true,
Long-suffering, and in mercy ordering all
things.

For even if we sin, we are Thine, knowing Thy
dominion ;

But we shall not sin, knowing that we are
accounted Thine :

For to know Thee is perfect righteousness,
Yea, to know Thy dominion is the root of
immortality " (Wisd. xv. 1-3).

He is the Shepherd who saves His sheep from the
wolves. " And the Lord of the sheep went with them,
as their leader, and all His sheep followed Him : and
His face was dazzling and glorious and terrible to behold "
(1 En. lxxxix. 22).

In the relation of God to nature, the nearness of God
is beautifully brought out. God's interest extends to
the universe and God is everywhere in it. God is from
the beginning, all the way, and to the end. He is not a
remote God.

" More like this we will not add,
And the conclusion of the matter is : He is all.
We will sing praises, because we cannot fathom ;
For greater is He than all His works.
Terrible is Jahveh exceedingly,
And wonderful are His mighty acts.
Ye that magnify Jahveh, lift up your voice,
As much as ye can, for there is still more !
Ye that exalt Him, renew your strength,
And weary not, for ye cannot fathom Him !
Who hath seen Him, that he may tell thereof ?
And who shall magnify Him as he is ? " (Ecclus.
xliii. 27-31).

All nature fears Him, says 1 *Enoch*, but not the
sinners. " Observe the heaven, ye children of heaven,

and every work of the Most High, and fear ye Him and work no evil in His presence . . . Has He not made the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein? Who has given understanding and wisdom to everything that moves on the earth and in the sea? Do not the sailors of the ships fear the sea? Yet sinners fear not the Most High " (ci. 1, 8 f.).

When we compare this teaching on the conception of God with that of the prophets, we may see advances in many directions, such as the deepening but yet unacknowledged sense of God as Father, which is almost suggestive of the opening words of the Lord's Prayer. The writers vary in their views about God and His relation to man and almost invariably speak of Him as the God of Israel only, but yet occasionally as the God of all men to Whom all nations shall turn. Other encouraging features, as we shall see, are that, while the holiness of God is by some writers conceived in a ceremonial and legal sense, other thinkers aimed at a reformation of this mechanical view of religion; also that in suggestions made of many ways of gaining forgiveness, human forgiveness is taught for the first time; further, that in two of the writings the meaning of forgiveness is remarkably stated.

One writer, amidst them all, wins our sympathy at once. He knows that God cannot be fully understood by men, and he is not slow to admit it. God's ways are inscrutable, and if man cannot understand himself, how can he understand the way of the Most High?

"He said moreover unto me: What belongs to thee—the things that have intermingled with thy growth—thou art incapable of understanding; how then should thy vessel be able to comprehend the way

of the Most High? For the way of the Most High has been formed without measure, how, then, should it be possible for a mortal in a corruptible world to understand the ways of the Incorruptible?" (4 Ez. iv. 10 f.).

(The body is the "vessel" of the soul or understanding).

SIN.

Men had now begun to think of the origin of sin, and their speculations are full of interest. The old idea that God was the author of good and evil was losing its hold, for Ben Sira, though he says in one place that sin is a work of God (Ecclus. xxxiii. 13-15), changes his view in another:

"Say not: 'From God is my transgression,'
For that which He hateth made He not" (xv. 11).

He has another view, however, to propound. The origin of sin is Eve, the first woman.

"From a woman did sin originate" (xxv. 24).

Further speculations are not wanting. For example, one writer attributes the origin of sin and the tendency to sin to Adam (4 Ez. iii. 20-22, iv. 30), and another to the fallen angels and demons (1 En. ix. 6, xv. 11).

The main interest, however, of the writers was not in sin but in sins, and in their view of sins they were primarily concerned with the Law. The Law was supreme. The Law was Wisdom. To love the Law was to love God. To observe the Law was to be religious. To keep the Law was the means of salvation. Hence we find that for the Law men fought against those of their own countrymen who were inclined to the Greek ideal of life (1 Macc. i. 11-15). All the writers were men

of the Law. Here are three typical sayings. "The eternal Law," "thy Law is life," and "though we depart, yet the Law abideth."

Sin was transgression of the Law. Consistently with this definition, it was held that to be holy was to be exact in the performance of the correct ritual; to be ceremonially exact was pleasing to God. This is, for example, the judgment of the Son of Sirach:

"Woe unto you, ungodly men,
Who have forsaken the Law of the Most High
God" (Ecclus. xli. 8).

Every breach of the Law was sinful: "The transgression of the Law, be it in small things or in great, is equally heinous; for in either case equally the Law is despised" (4 Macc. v. 20 f.).

Sin is universal, but some have never sinned: "Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, which have not sinned against Thee" (Prayer of Man. 8). Or again,

"Except David, Hezekiah, and Josiah,
They all dealt utterly corruptly,
And forsook the Law of the Most High"
(Ecclus. xlix. 4).

As to the bearing of this view of the Law on ethics, we read in some of the literature of this period that to love God through the Law had greater claims on the Jew than to love man and that if Law and love for man came into conflict the Law must prevail. Hence human kindness was not so valuable as ritual; a loyal Jew found often that mercy came into conflict with sacrifice and ritual.

Some of the writers went further. They believed that men could acquire merit by scrupulous observance of the Law, that they could even have a claim on God

for reward. No wonder Jesus said to men who thought in these terms, "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do" (Luke xvii. 10).

Thus, though ethical teaching is found in the literature, emphasis is being laid on ritual observance and ritual offences. In short, ceremonial offences are more sinful than moral offences.

But, on the other hand, new thoughts of sin were beginning to gain ground. When one writer says that moral sins caused the Flood, namely, "fornication and uncleanness and all iniquity" (Jub. vii. 20), we realise the new outlook, and our expectation is confirmed by the frequent assertion that sin hinders man's approach to God, and that man sins not only by act but by thought. "For crooked thoughts separate from God" (Wisd. i. 3), and again, "For fearing lest he should offend the Lord, he will not do wrong to any man, even in thought" (T. G. v. 5). In this matter we find language which is closely akin to our Lord's teaching on the seventh commandment. For the sin of adulterous thought is frequently stressed. "I never committed fornication by the uplifting of my eyes" (T. Iss. vii. 2). "He that hath a pure mind in love, looketh not after a woman with a view to fornication: for he hath no defilement in his heart, because the Spirit of God resteth upon him" (T. Ben. viii. 2).

"With a married woman sit not at table,
And (mingle not) wine in her company;
Lest thou incline thine heart towards her
And in thy blood (descendest) to the pit"
(Ecclus. ix. 9).

Further contact with our Lord's teaching may possibly be seen in the mention of an unforgivable sin. The unpardonable sin here is uncircumcision. According to the Book of Jubilees those uncircumcised on the eighth day are "to be rooted out of the earth." Those who do not circumcise their sons are "sons of Beliar" . . . "And there will no more be pardon or forgiveness unto them for all the sin of this eternal error" (Jub. xv. 26, 33, 34). Our Lord in His logion (pp. 167 ff.) taught that in His view the unpardonable sin was not uncircumcision, not an act but a spirit of sin, like the spirit of unforgiving-ness.

Are the sins of the fathers visited on their children? This problem which puzzled Israel in the days of the greater prophets is seen to be still alive. Ezekiel and the Second Isaiah had faced it, but their answers had evidently failed to satisfy. We read that Tobit prays he may not be punished for the sins of his fathers: "And now, O Lord, remember thou me, and look upon me; and take not vengeance on me for my sins, both for mine ignorances and my fathers'" (iii. 3). Again, we read in *Judith* that the people cried against Ozias saying, "We take to witness against you the heaven and the earth, and our God and the Lord of our fathers, which punisheth us according to our sins and the sins of our fathers, that he do not according as we have said this day" (vii. 28).

Suffering is punishment for sin. So says Ben Sira,

"For sin is the rallying-place of insolence,
And its source overfloweth with depravity.
For this cause hath God stricken such an one
marvellously,
And smitten him to the uttermost" (Ecclus.
x. 13).

Baruch points out that the present calamities are the punishment for transgressions of the past :

“ Ye were sold to the nations,
But not for destruction :
Because ye moved God to wrath,
Ye were delivered unto your adversaries ” (iv. 6).

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

As the burden of the Law affected men's thoughts of sin, it was bound to influence their thoughts of forgiveness. But, in the literature under consideration, we find that, in spite of the Law, a truer conception of God's forgiveness of sinners and human forgiveness has inspired some writers. Hosea had said, “ I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” but many of our writers say that God required not only mercy, nor only sacrifice, but mercy and sacrifice. In other words, it is now perceived that the ethical demands of God must be met by a moral change in the hearts of men. Ceremonial by itself will not suffice to win forgiveness ; to sacrifice must be added love.

It is in this sphere of forgiveness that the literature of this period makes one of its greatest contributions. It does so in three ways. First, there are various modes of gaining God's forgiveness ; they anticipate the seven modes which Origen taught. Secondly, by teaching that one of these modes is human forgiveness, the literature almost anticipates our Lord's own teaching. Thirdly, in the profound analysis of forgiveness, it falls very little short of the teaching of the New Testament.

Sins, as we have seen, are either ceremonial or ethical. Ceremonial sins are against holiness, and need to be atoned for by daily sacrifice. If they are not thus atoned for, serious consequences will follow. We may take one

illustration of each of these ideas. That sacrifice makes atonement for sins is taught in *Jubilees*: "And this day has been ordained that they should grieve thereon for their sins, and for all their transgressions and for all their errors, so that they might cleanse themselves on that day once a year" (xxxiv. 19). The danger of unatoned sin is voiced by Judith when she says that her race will prevail against the enemy who, having broken the Law, must suffer: "And now, that my lord be not defeated and frustrate of his purpose, and that death may fall upon them, their sin hath overtaken them, wherewith they shall provoke their God to anger, whensoever they shall do wickedness" (xi. 11).

This theory of atonement is, however, not a panacea for all ills of the soul, for ethical or even for ceremonial failures. By some it is taught that more is required than mere sacrifice, that ceremonial rites by themselves will not suffice, that sacrifices cannot reconcile of themselves. Evidently there were thinkers to whom moral failure was a serious matter. We may take three illustrations from *Ecclesiasticus*. In the first, Ben Sira says that sacrifice without righteousness is unacceptable to God.

"The sacrifice of the unrighteous man is a mocking offering,
And unacceptable are the oblations of the godless" (xxxiv. 18).

This is only negative teaching, but in the second he advances a stage when he says,

"Say not, 'He will look upon the multitude of my gifts,
And when I offer (them) to the Most High God
He will accept them'" (vii. 9).

With the third we get positive teaching. He is using sacrificial language, and applying it to acts of mercy and kindness, and also exalting the place of repentance. Thus

REPENTANCE is a means of forgiveness.

“ He that keepeth the law multiplieth offerings ;
He sacrificeth a peace-offering that heedeth the
commandments.

He that practiseth kindness offereth fine flour,
And he that doeth mercy sacrificeth a thank-
offering.

A thing well-pleasing to the Lord is to avoid
wickedness,

And a propitiation to avoid what is wrong ”
(xxxv. 1-3).

The Pseudepigrapha continue the same thought of repentance as a means of forgiveness. For example, “ True repentance after a godly sort (destroyeth ignorance, and) driveth away the darkness, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth knowledge to the soul, and leadeth the mind to salvation ” (T. G. v. 7). Thus one way of forgiveness is Repentance, which avails with sacrifice for ceremonial sins. It is God who helps men to repent, says one writer (T. B. viii. 2), but other writers think that man has the power in himself.

PRAYER as a means of forgiveness is taught. Even ceremonial sins can be forgiven by prayer. So says Eleazar in his prayer for pardon for such “ impious deeds ” : “ And if our life has been ensnared in impious deeds during our sojourning, save us from the hand of the enemy, and destroy us, O Lord, by whatever fate thou choosest ” (3 Macc. vi. 10).

A wider view is taken in the Sibylline Books :
“ stretching your hands to heaven, seek forgiveness for your former deeds, and with praises ask pardon for your bitter ungodliness ” (iv. 166). The whole of the Prayer of Manasses is a prayer for forgiveness from God, who is addressed as “ O Lord Almighty, which art in heaven.” It includes the following passages :

“ Thou, O Lord, according to Thy great goodness hast promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned against Thee ; and in the multitude of Thy mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved.

“ Thou, therefore, O Lord, that art the God of the righteous, hast not appointed repentance unto the righteous, unto Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, which have not sinned against Thee :

“ But Thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner ;

“ For the sins I have sinned are more in number than the sands of the sea. . . .

“ And now I bow the knee of mine heart, beseeching Thee of Thy gracious goodness.

“ I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned,
And I acknowledge mine iniquities.
But, I humbly beseech thee,
Forgive me, O Lord, forgive me.
And destroy me not with mine iniquities.”

FASTING is a means of forgiveness.

“ He maketh atonement for sins of ignorance by fasting and afflicting his soul,
And the Lord counteth guiltless every pious man and his house ” (Ps. Sol. iii. 9).

“ And after this I repented with set purpose of my soul for seven years before the Lord. And wine and strong drink I drank not, and flesh entered not into my mouth, and I eat no pleasant food ; but I mourned over my sin, for it was great, such as had not been in Israel ” (T. Reu. i. 9 f.).

ALMSGIVING, according to some writers, brings remission of sin. Says Ben Sira,

“ Benevolence to a father shall not be blotted out,
And as a substitute for sins it shall be firmly
planted ” (Ecclus. iii. 14).

“ A flaming fire doth water quench,
So does almsgiving atone for sin ” (Ecclus. iii.
30).

In the Book of Tobit one of the maxims of life is,
“ Better is prayer with truth, and alms with righteousness than riches with unrighteousness ; it is better to to give alms than to lay up gold ; almsgiving doth deliver from death, and it purges away all sin ” (xii. 8).

SUFFERING cleanses from sin, says the *Psalms of Solomon*.

“ Happy is the man whom the Lord remembereth
with reproving,
And whom He restraineth from the way of
evil with strokes,
That he may be cleansed from sin, that it may
not be multiplied ” (x. 1).

“ For the Lord spareth His pious ones,
And blotteth out their errors by His chastening ” (xiii. 9).

MEDIATORSHIP effects forgiveness. Phinehas "made atonement for the children of Israel" (Ecclus. xlv. 23). But this view is contradicted in *Baruch*: "For we do not present our supplication before Thee, O Lord our God, for the righteousness of our fathers, and of our kings" (ii. 19).

DEATH, as in later Rabbinical literature, is a means of atonement. The view of Ben Sira, it should be noted, was expressed before there was a belief in resurrection.

"Delay not to pay thy vow in due time,
And wait not till death to be justified" (Ecclus. xviii. 22).

THE WORKS OF THE RIGHTEOUS bring forgiveness, according to 2 *Baruch*. "And if others did evil, it was due to Zion, that on account of the works of those who wrought good works she should be forgiven" (xiv. 7). Again, "And at all times make request perseveringly and pray diligently with your whole heart that the Mighty One may be reconciled to you, and that He may not reckon the multitude of your sins, but remember the rectitude of your fathers" (lxxxiv. 10).

WISDOM brings salvation, says the Wisdom of Solomon.

"Through wisdom were they saved" (ix. 18).

Of these nine methods of gaining forgiveness mentioned in the literature of this period, five are new. They are fasting, almsgiving, mediatorship, death, and wisdom.

There is one other method, and this the most important. It is HUMAN FORGIVENESS. For the first time in all Old Testament literature we find it stated that if a man forgives his neighbour, God will forgive him.

“Forgive thy neighbour the injury (done to thee),

And then, when thou prayest, thy sins will be forgiven ” (Ecclus. xxviii. 2).

What did Ben Sira mean by “neighbour?” If he meant all men, his saying would have fully anticipated the petition in the Lord’s Prayer. But that he understood “neighbour” in this universal sense is more than doubtful, for amongst his ten types of men who are accounted blessed, he mentions the man “who liveth to see his enemy’s fall” (xxv. 7); and later he writes that it is wisdom for a man to leave behind him “an avenger against his enemies” (xxx. 6). Human forgiveness in the passage is therefore limited in range; it is only a policy of prudence, and negative in meaning, namely, the absence of revenge. However, there are wonderful ideas of forgiveness, as we shall see next.

THE MEANING OF FORGIVENESS.

A passage in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* will bring to mind some sayings of our Lord, so close are the parallels. It transcends anything in the Old Testament.

“And now, my children, I exhort you, love ye each one his brother, and put away hatred from your hearts, love one another in deed, and in word, and in the inclination of the soul. . . . Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he repent and confess, forgive him. But if he deny it, do not get into a passion with him, lest catching the poison from thee he take to swearing, and so thou sin doubly. . . . And though he deny it and yet have a sense of shame

when reproved, give over reproving him. For he who denieth may repent so as not again to wrong thee ; yea, he may also honour thee, and (fear and) be at peace with thee. And if he be shameless and persist in his wrong-doing, even so forgive him from the heart, and leave to God the avenging " (T. Gad, 6).

It is as Christian a piece of writing as we can find anywhere. Forgiveness is full restoration to friendship. If a man wrongs you, you must first get rid of the feeling of hatred, and then only speak gently to him about the wrong. If he repents, you must forgive him. If he does not repent, there is to be no hatred lest he get poisoned by your anger, and, to his wrong, add the guilt of cursing you, and thus you become guilty of a double sin, namely, his unbridled wrath and the increase of his guilt. Therefore do not continue your reproaches. One of two issues will result. If he feels ashamed and continues in his evil ways, even then forgive him and leave him to God to deal with. In any case, whether he repents or not, forgive him.

The Parallels between this passage in the *Testament of Gad* and some of the sayings of our Lord are so close that we are justified in saying that He knew it. " If thy brother sin, rebuke him ; and if he repent, forgive him " (Luke xvii. 3). " If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone : if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." " So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts " (Matt. xviii. 15, 35).

The teaching of the *Testaments* on forgiveness does not end here. It includes non-retaliation and goes on to say that the offended one is to pray for the wrong-doer :

“ And if any one seeketh to do evil unto you, do well unto him, and pray for him, and ye shall be redeemed of the Lord from all evil ” (T. Jos. xviii. 2). Further, “ Do ye also love one another, and with long-suffering hide ye one another’s faults. For God delighteth in the unity of brethren, and in the purpose of a heart that takes pleasure in love ” (T. Jos. xvii. 2). “ Unless ye keep yourselves from the spirit of lying and of anger, and love truth and long-suffering, ye shall perish ” (T. Dan, ii. 1).

“ Have therefore compassion in your hearts, my children, because even as a man doeth to his neighbour, even so also will the Lord do to him ” (T. Zeb. v. 3).

“ The spirit of love worketh together with the law of God in long-suffering unto the salvation of men ” (T. G. iv. 7).

Two striking quotations from the *Secrets of Enoch* carry on the same great thoughts on forgiveness :

“ Endure for the sake of the Lord every wound, every injury, every evil word and attack. If ill-requitals befall you, return them not either to neighbour or enemy, because the Lord will return them for you and be your avenger on the day of great judgment, that there be no avenging here among men ” (l. 3 f.).

“ Walk, my children, in long-suffering, in meekness, honesty, in provocation, in grief, in faith, and in truth, in *reliance* on promises, in illness, in abuse, in wounds, in temptation, in nakedness, in privation, loving one another, till you go out from this age of ills, that you become inheritors of endless time ” (lxvi. 6).

There is, however, another side to these striking views of forgiveness. Vengeance and hatred of enemies

are taught. The death of Cain through the fall of a house is a righteous judgment (Jub. iv. 31). Abraham says to Isaac, "Take no gifts for the blood of man . . . the earth cannot be cleansed from the blood of man save by the blood of him who shed it" (Jub. xxi. 19). Moses tells Israel that when God exalts him,

"Thou shalt look from on high and shalt see
thy enemies in Gehenna
And thou shalt recognise them and rejoice,
And thou shalt give thanks and confess thy
Creator" (Ass. Mos. x. 10).

Judith, before she commits murder, prays,
"Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, this day" (Jud.
xiii. 7).

The literature of this period has made a great advance in its teaching on forgiveness. Man can gain God's forgiveness for moral wrong-doing in more ways than one, but not by sacrifice unless it is united with repentance. The principle that divine forgiveness depends on human forgiveness is foreshadowed; and so also is the Christian definition of forgiveness.

The best teaching on forgiveness is given in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. This book was written in Galilee. It was from Galilee that Jesus drew His apostles; it was in Galilee that Jesus taught His Prayer and the corollary to it. Galilee was a fit soil in which to plant His teaching, for, as the *Testament* shows us, there was in that province a higher sense of forgiveness than in Judea.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD

THE lofty and profound conception of God revealed to the Old Testament prophets is that on which our Lord based His own teaching. He developed the various contributions of the prophets and added to them. He claimed to have unique knowledge of God (Matt. xi. 27).

As this book is an essay on a petition of the Lord's Prayer we may turn to the Prayer for its teaching on the characteristics of God. Taking the parts of the Prayer in order, we learn as follows :

Our Father	God is Father.
Which art in heaven,	God is Spirit.
Hallowed be thy name,	God is Holy.
Thy kingdom come,	God is King.
Thy will be done,	God is Lord.
Give us this day . . . ,	God is Creator.
And forgive us . . . ,	God is Love.
And lead us not . . . ,	God is Good.

Of all the attributes of God which may be discerned in the Prayer, some received from Jesus greater emphasis than others. Our Lord, for example, did not stress the fundamental teaching of Isaiah that God was Holy. This may have been due either to the association of ceremonial purity with the thought of holiness or to its suggestion of God's transcendence, that God was far away from man, that He was not near to him. But one

expression used by Jesus where the word holy occurs is unique. It is to be found in His great intercessory prayer, "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are" (John xvii. 11).

The designation which was all-sufficient for Jesus was Father. The thought of the love of God was ever associated by Him with that of the Fatherhood of God. The supreme manifestation of love, namely, forgiveness, was similarly associated with the thought of God as Father. We find it in the Lord's Prayer and in that corollary to it given in the Sermon on the Mount.

The Jews to whom Christ was speaking were not unaware of the thought of God as Father, particularly of the nation which was His son, His first-born. But the disciples became conscious that Jesus put such deep meaning into His thought of God as Father that they saw He was giving the term almost a new connotation. For instance, He spoke of God's impartial love for each individual soul, and in so doing He spoke of God as Father and linked it up with the love man must bear for others, even our enemies. The passage has a bearing on the subject of forgiveness and it is well worth quoting here. "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. v. 44 f.). To love our enemies, to forgive them, makes us sons of God the Father. We are God's children not because He made us but because He loves us all.

In fact, the disciples of Jesus seemed to have found the meaning attached by their Master and Teacher to

the term Father so intense and so vital that they kept the Aramaic word even when they wrote in Greek. Mark retained it in his Gospel as the term used by Jesus in that terrible agony in the Garden. "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (xiv. 36). St. Paul used it when writing probably his very earliest epistle. "And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6).

It is no exaggeration to say that in all our Lord's teaching, the dominant principle is that in all things we are to think of God in the light of this relationship—God is our Father and we are His children. It is this family relationship which gives the underlying motive of the primary condition of forgiveness.

The thought of God as Father is the central conception of Jesus. We know that this thought was with Him when He was a lad of twelve years old; we know it was with Him in His dying moments and that His very last utterance at the moment of death began with the word Father. His whole ministry was permeated with this same thought, even when He preached on the kingdom of God or led His disciples to see in Himself the long-expected Messiah. He was the beloved Son, so the voice from heaven proclaimed Him at the Baptism and the Transfiguration. The disciples were in a special sense the children of God Who, said Jesus, is "My Father" and "your Father."

Thus the term Father in the Gospels is used in three senses. God was Father of Jesus in a unique sense; He was Father of the disciples in a special sense, for they were the nucleus of the Church which was our

Lord's own creation—He spoke of it as “ My Church ” ; God was the Father of all men, righteous or sinful. It does not surprise us therefore that in St. John's Gospel and in the early days of the Church the special contribution made by Christianity was held to be that God was Love, and that this love of God was unquenchable. We are to love those that trespass against us, we are to manifest this love at its highest in forgiveness, because of the knowledge that God loves the offender as much as He loves the offended.

“ If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also ” (1 John iv. 20, 21). Not to forgive is not to love. If, then, we do not forgive, we, of our own choice, cut ourselves away from the friendship and fellowship of the Father. We must forgive not once, not seven times, but seventy times seven. This insistence by Jesus on unlimited forgiveness of our fellow-men cannot be gainsaid. He could not do otherwise in teaching the love of the Father for His children.

METHODS OF TEACHING.

Jesus did not teach about God by words only. For there were three ways in which Jesus taught, as there are three ways in which we teach. They were by what He was, by what He did, by what He said. The summary of our Lord's teaching has so far been confined to what He said. What was His teaching in each of the two other ways ?

First, then, by what He was—the most powerful method of teaching, for it is the best of methods. What

we are will influence what we say and do. What we are is the most effective of all methods of teaching, for it is the influence of personality on personality. Jesus, in what He was, showed us God. The early Christians took time to find this out, but they did. In Jesus they saw God. Hence, when we get behind the records of the Gospels and see Christ as He was, we see Him manifesting the love of God. His tenderness, His love, His forbearance, His patience, His friendship, His compassion, His goodness, His self-sacrifice are all manifestations of the love of God. As Jesus loved all, the righteous no less than the publicans and sinners, so God loves all; but as the love of Jesus was not sentimental, so neither is the love of God. The love of Jesus was righteous love, a longing for all to be like Him. The love of Jesus sought what love always seeks, the free response of the loved one to the love of the lover. This is the nature of the love of God the Father.

When we read the story of His life, we find that because of what He was, opposition began to break forth against Him. Of the reasons which led men to be critical of Him and to turn against Him, it is very striking that one was the exercise of His power to forgive, and another was His friendship with publicans and sinners. Forgiveness, an aspect of love, was one of the first things which Jesus taught. Jesus showed perfect love in action because He was one with God.

Then, by what He did. He never compelled men to follow Him. He wanted them to think for themselves. When John sent from prison to ask Jesus who He was, for he had heard of the works of Christ, what was our Lord's answer? John was to draw the conclusion himself. The messengers of John were to report to him what they

had seen Jesus do and that they had heard the gospel being preached to the poor. Then Jesus added a beatitude, "Blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me" (Luke vii. 18-23). The Baptist had in some way failed in his judgment of Jesus, and Jesus was encouraging him to overcome his failure. If John reconsidered the matter, he might see that the miracles worked by Jesus were signs of the love of God, which Jesus was showing, and that, as Jesus worked no miracle for His own safety and protection, His love was unselfish. Jesus taught by miracles.

His Passion taught the early Church. The early Christians saw in His sufferings and in His death sacrificial love and salvation. In what He did in those days, they saw Him as their Saviour. No wonder that the longest records of any period of our Lord's ministry are those of His Passion. They saw Him always serving, willingly giving His life for others whatever the cost, and even on the same night in which He was betrayed, giving Himself to the disciples to be the life of their souls. Thus did Jesus teach us not only what our sin costs God, but that God gives Himself to us, whatever the cost to Him. We cannot realise this cost, unless we forgive every wrong done us, however terrible the wrong may be. St. Paul saw this after his conversion. "For when we were still in weakness, Christ died in due time for the ungodly. For the ungodly! Why, a man will hardly die for the just—though one might bring oneself to die, if need be, for a good man. But God proves His love for us by this, that Christ died for us when we were still sinners" (Rom. v. 6-8, Moffatt's Translation).

CHAPTER V

FORGIVENESS

IN order that we may form a just estimate of the contribution made by our Lord to a fuller understanding of the scope, significance, and conditions of forgiveness, we may gather together the knowledge of the subject in the light of the teaching of the prophets, priests, and apocalyptists, of pre-Christian days.

Forgiveness was essentially restoration to fellowship, and this meaning of the term remained unaltered whether Jesus spoke of divine forgiveness or human forgiveness or forgiveness bestowed by a community such as the Church. The idea was ever the same. But within this dominant conception there were possibilities of enrichment and enlargement. For example, even in the prophecies of the Second Isaiah and of Hosea, the love and redemptive purposes of God were limited to Israel, love of enemies was but faintly admitted as a duty, duty towards one's neighbour had a limited application, and, except in apocalyptic teaching, no connexion was seen to exist between divine forgiveness and man's forgiveness of his fellow-men. These various imperfections may be attributed to the incompleteness of the conception of God as Father and as Love, as Father of all men, whether Jew or Gentile, Whose love was bestowed on all alike whether good or evil, just or unjust. But, however limited the details were, and however imperfect, yet Israel held that the essence of the idea was restoration to communion.

Further, in their conception of forgiveness, Israel realised that there was in it no condoning of sin and no ignoring of it, for such condonation would have been immoral. They had a sound ethical outlook in this respect.

Again, Israel learnt, particularly through the Exile, that forgiveness was not remission of penalty. In the earlier stages of their history, the religious teachers thought that the practical proof of the forgiveness of Jehovah was this remission of punishment or suffering, and prosperity in material things. But their error was perceived in the light of deeper knowledge of the character of Jehovah. Forgiveness was then seen not to be penal but remedial. Forgiveness was seen to be an act of a merciful God even if punishment was present ; forgiveness was not the forbearing to inflict penalty.

Again, there was a clear understanding of the connexion between righteousness and forgiveness. It was realised that forgiveness was not incompatible with righteousness, that the divine forgiveness was righteous in character not only because of the condemnation of sin, but also because it was granted only on conditions, of which the most insistent was repentance with confession. The thinkers of the period between the Testaments suggested other methods, some of which, such as almsgiving, had unfortunate effects in Pharisaism, but of all the conditions which were held possible in His days, our Lord retained repentance with confession, and added another with universal application, namely, human forgiveness.

Forgiveness was bestowed by Jehovah for no merit of Israel but of His mercy and grace. It was He who redeemed Israel and called them by His name and no

more remembered their sins. In forgiveness there was a complete blotting out of the past.

The experience of forgiveness was to be seen in the removing of the state of tension or mistrust which existed after sin. The pardoned one now felt a joy, and could express it in song. He did remain conscious of his sin committed before forgiveness, so conscious that he remembered it in his joy, but the happiness lay in the fact that his sense of guilt was now no hindrance to communion. Another experience of importance was the call to service on behalf of Jehovah. Israel in a ministry to others would bring them to share in the experience.

It will be evident that the ideas of forgiveness which Christ taught were not all new to His hearers. They would know what forgiveness meant, what fellowship implied, what repentance demanded, and also that God alone forgave sins of His grace and mercy. On these foundations Jesus built His fuller revelation, and His disciples developed what Jesus revealed.

Two terms used in this review of forgiveness must be considered before we go further and consider our Lord's unfolding of the idea. They are repentance and fellowship.

Repentance in Old Testament days clearly implied confession, sorrow for sin, and the intention to amend. No amendment was actually made by the penitent except in the sacrificial system. Jehovah was ready to forgive, irrespective of sacrifice. "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. xxxii. 5). In the intercessions of Moses and Phinehas, however, satisfaction was offered by them to Jehovah. Also by the destruction of the idolaters in the wilderness by the Levites, and by the

action of Phinehas, "who was jealous with the jealousy of Jehovah," satisfaction was made for sin.

We do not, however, find any explanation of repentance comparable to that given in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Repentance in the Old Testament is defined either as a change of mind, of which God is capable as well as man, or as a turning away from sin specially in conduct, though occasionally in heart (Joel ii. 12). The change is mainly ethical, and it is in this sense that John the Baptist issued his call to repentance.

Fellowship could not be fully understood because of the non-existence of any institution corresponding to the Church. Fellowship for Israel was fellowship with Jehovah, but the Second Isaiah has a vision of fellowship between Jehovah and men, and of men with men when all nations shall gather themselves together and come to Zion (Isa. lx). It is not surprising that in prophetic times the restoration of fellowship between men, that is human forgiveness, was unrealised as a condition of the forgiveness of God when the meaning of "neighbour" was restricted to an Israelite, and the obverse of loving one's neighbour was to hate one's enemy. But this does not mean that Jehovah did not in days before Christ forgive on repentance only. The conditions of forgiveness were adapted to the spiritual attainments of Israel. God in times past spoke to Israel in many forms and fashions adapted to their state of knowledge and enlightenment.

Forgiveness in the Gospels.—What was, then, the view of forgiveness set forth by Jesus and His Apostles? We shall give here a résumé of this teaching, as we understand it, and consider it in detail in future chapters.

Forgiveness is full restoration to fellowship. Divine forgiveness is that bestowed by God, human forgiveness is the offended one's restoration of the offender to fellowship, and forgiveness of a community is restoration of the penitent to fellowship in that community. Forgiveness is not condoning of sin nor an ignoring of it, nor is it remission of penalty. Forgiveness is restoration to fellowship as in a family of which God is Father, Who loves all without discriminating between Jew and Gentile, good or evil. Divine forgiveness and human forgiveness are analogous.

God's forgiveness is conditioned, but will be bestowed on all sins but one, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This is not a single act but a state of which the unforgiving spirit is an example.

Divine forgiveness is given for no merit of man, but is an outpouring of God's gracious mercy.

There are two conditions of divine forgiveness. Repentance defined in the Prodigal Son as an attitude to God, and a forgiving spirit, which we refer to as forgiving-ness. These requirements are in accordance with ethical principles. Christ's insistence on human forgiveness is revolutionary. Of these two conditions forgiveness is primary, because it maintains the union with the divine, which is the gift of Baptism ; it was inserted in the Lord's Prayer and specially emphasised by Him ; considers what we should do to those who offend us which repentance does not require ; manifests unselfishness in an unusual degree, and is that one condition which is not taught in the Old Testament. The primacy is supported on psychological grounds and from a consideration of the nature of God. Both conditions are binding on Christians who are to set a high standard to the world.

Human forgiveness and that of a community must be unlimited in quality and quantity but must be governed by moral law. Therefore there is place in it for reproof and rebuke. It is conditional on the offender's repentance. But forgiving-ness requires that the offended party must use every means to win the offender back to fellowship. It must be active to redeem.

Fellowship, in the New Testament, is based on personal attachment to Jesus and strengthened by forgiveness. Manifested not only in the breaking of the bread and in joint meetings for prayer and in relief of distress, it is fully expressed in love for the brethren. To live in fellowship one with another is to live in fellowship with God. If this fellowship is broken by a member, every effort must be made to win the recalcitrant member back to fellowship. The Church, founded by Jesus, was to show this fellowship at its highest. The fellowship with God and with one another was a single fellowship, and it was to be maintained at all costs and at a high standard which safeguarded the holiness, righteousness, and love of God as Father.

The word fellowship (*κοινωνία*) is not found in the Gospels but is found in the Acts and the Epistles.

REFERENCES TO FORGIVENESS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The commonest Greek word for forgiveness in the New Testament is *ἄφεσις*, which is translated forgiveness or remission in the Authorised and Revised Versions. This noun is not found in St. John's Gospel but is a favourite word of St. Luke; out of the seventeen instances of its use, it occurs ten times in Luke and Acts, once in Matthew, twice in Mark, and four times in the Epistles.

The references are as follows :

Matt. xxvi. 28. For this is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins.

Mark i. 4. John came, who baptised in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins.

Mark iii. 29. But whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness.

Luke i. 77. To give knowledge of salvation unto His people in the remission of their sins.

Luke iii. 3. And he (John) came into all the region round about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins.

Luke iv. 18. He hath sent me to proclaim release (*κηρύξαι ἄφεσιν*) to the captives, to set at liberty (*ἐν ἀφέσει*) them that are bruised.

Luke xxiv. 47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations.

Acts ii. 38. And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins.

Acts v. 31. Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.

Acts x. 43. To Him bear all the prophets witness, that through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins.

Acts xiii. 38. Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins.

Acts xxvi. 18. To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power

of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins.

Ephesians i. 7. In whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.

Colossians i. 14. In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

Hebrews ix. 22. And apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.

Hebrews x. 18. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

The verb to forgive or to remit is found about fifty times in the New Testament, of which over thirty are in the synoptic Gospels. Where either the noun or verb is used, it is almost always with the thought of sin either implied or expressed. What is forgiven is sin, debt, trespass, iniquity. The meaning of the Greek word for forgiveness or remission is a release, the cancelling of a debt, the complete putting away of sin.

Other words expressing the same idea are to be found in St. Paul. Where forgiveness is merged in the idea of justification, we find *χαρίζεσθαι* eleven times; this word, translated forgive, has the sense also of *conferring a favour*, being gracious to, e.g., "But to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, for your sakes have I forgiven it in the person of Christ" (2 Cor. ii. 10). Luke uses this word twice in successive verses with the meaning to *forgive frankly a debt*, to confer a favour graciously. "When they had not wherewith to pay, He forgave them both" . . . (vii. 42, 43).

Other words used are to *cover* (*καλύπτω*) as in

Rom. iv. 7 "whose sins are covered" (this recalls the Semitic word used in the Old Testament), and to *pass by*, to *overlook* (παρίημι), once only in the New Testament in *Romans* iii. 25 "because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime."

Of all these terms, the richest in significance is the first, ἄφεσις. As the word is of primary importance, just as *hesed* was in the Old Testament, we will briefly consider its meaning and also distinguish between it and πάρεσις which was used by St. Paul when he wrote of a "passing over" of sins in the earlier days of Israel's history.

The verb ἀφίημι, a common word in the New Testament, has a variety of meanings which include the following, to let go, to let be, to permit, to give up to another, to depart, to turn away from, to yield up, to leave remaining, to relinquish a prey, "to forbid them not," and very particularly to cancel a debt by not demanding it. The last meaning is that which gives the idea of forgiveness. It is the opposite of κρατεῖν, found in the commission of our Lord to forgive and *retain* sins (John xx. 23). Ἀφίημι thus is to remit a debt by not entering it into a book or by tearing up the bill, as the lord did with the servant when he forgave the loan (Matt. xviii. 27). So also in the version of the Lord's Prayer and its corollary in Matthew. The equivalent of it is by St. Paul referred to as οὐ λογιζέσθαι "not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (2 Cor. v. 19).

The idea of a ledger in which men's deeds are written was a familiar one to the Jews. In *Daniel*, for example, mention is made of books opened on the judgment day (vii. 10; cf. Rev. xx. 12). In *Esther* we read of "the book of records of the chronicles" in which the good and

bad records of subjects were entered. A "book of remembrance" is referred to by Malachi (iii. 16).

The verb in the sense to forgive sins is found in the Gospels (Matt. ix. 2, 5 f.; Mark ii. 5, 7; Luke v. 20) and also in 1 John (i. 9, ii. 12) and James (v. 15). In Mark and Matthew we also find it in the sense to forgive one absolutely (Matt. xii. 32, xviii. 21, 35; Mark iv. 12). In Acts it is found in the story of Simon the sorcerer, "if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (viii. 22).

When we turn to the noun *ἄφεσις*, we notice, in the complete list of references given above, that the term in the Acts is connected either with repentance and baptism, or with Christ or with His name, and is always connected with sins. In St. Paul this cancelling of a debt is associated with the death of Christ; so also in the first reference to it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The idea of a cancelled debt therefore is developed by St. Paul into the doctrine of justification.

Trench suggests that the higher application of the noun may have been probably due to the year of Jubilee in which all debts were forgiven (*Synonyms of the New Testament*, § XXXIII) but the idea of the imputation or non-imputation of sin in a legal sense is frequently found in the Septuagint. Whatever the source of the symbol for forgiveness, the Jews were familiar with the thought of a spiritual ledger and the cancelling of entries in it as a symbol for righteousness. "*Ἀφεσις* is a complete obliteration of sin; the debt has been cancelled, and God does not remember it any more (Jer. xxxi. 34). The sinner is fully restored to God's favour and fellowship.

Let us turn to St. Paul's term which he used once

when he spoke of forgiveness in Old Testament days. He used the word *παρεσις*, a pretermission or passing over, a temporary withholding of punishment which may be inflicted at some future time, instead of *ἄφεσις* which means complete and full forgiveness. Does forgiveness in the Old Testament mean something different from that of the New Testament? The context will help to a right consideration.

“For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood, to show His righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God” (Rom. iii. 23-25).

What the Apostle means is that all men have sinned, the Jew and the Gentile. In past days man tried to attain righteousness by carefully observing the Law, but now he is called upon to do so by his attachment to a Person. This righteousness is now made possible by the sacrifice of Christ's death on the Cross, for by that death God accepts men as righteous. This acceptance is an act of His grace and not because of any merit of man. God set Jesus there upon the Cross, and the shedding of His blood was a sacrifice which atones for sin, and this atonement or propitiation man takes to himself by faith. The purpose of this act was to vindicate God's righteousness. In former days the sins of man had been passed over, and men had misunderstood God's forbearance, and there was a risk of men forgetting that He was a God of righteousness, but the hour had come when He must show how much He hated sin, as He did by the death of His Son.

St. Paul therefore is dealing with the ground or basis of the forgiveness of sins. He is making a contribution to the doctrine of the Atonement. The doctrine of forgiveness on the basis of atonement through the death of Christ is another problem than ours on the forgiveness of sins, but the doctrine of justification to which reference has been made requires some consideration in our essay.

JUSTIFICATION AND FORGIVENESS.

Justification is a forensic term based on the thought of God as Judge. Forgiveness is a non-legal term based on the thought of God as Father. Both justification and forgiveness imply that the offender is forgiven not for what he is, namely, a sinner and transgressor, but only for what he is capable of being. In the former case the wrong-doer is acquitted and declared to be not-guilty, in the latter he is welcomed and received into fellowship. In both cases he is forgiven. In both cases what matters to God is the change of heart. No reference is made to the past which is blotted out. It is therefore no straining of language if justification and forgiveness are treated as interchangeable terms. Justification, it will be admitted, lacks that personal intimate note involved in forgiveness, but it brings out more clearly that the guilt of sin is removed and abolished.

Jesus used the term "justified," though His preference was for the idea of forgiveness. St. Paul preferred to speak of justification because of his own experience, but he did not lose sight of the term on which Jesus dwelt with deep feeling.

We will therefore begin our short study of justification by referring to our Lord's use of the word "justify."

In two passages where we read that wisdom is justified by her works (Matt. xi. 19) or of all her children (Luke vii. 35) the sense is indubitably "held righteous" and not "made righteous." The same meaning is to be clearly attached to the phrase "By thy words thou shalt be justified" (Matt. xii. 37). In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican where we read that the publican went down to his house justified rather than the other, we come very near the Pauline use of the term: As our last illustration we may refer to the lawyer who desired to "justify himself," by which Luke undoubtedly means to be declared righteous. In the Gospels therefore *δικαιοῦν*, a forensic term, translated to justify, always has the meaning to hold or pronounce righteous and not to make righteous. This is in keeping with the fact that verbs in *-ω* derived from adjectives which have a moral connotation have always the meaning of "accounted as." For instance, *ἁγιάζω* means to account and not to make worthy. Now *δικαιοῦν* says nothing of the state of the person who is pronounced not-guilty or righteous. The sinner is acquitted irrespective of merit. This is best seen in the passage, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5). In this crucial passage the person justified has nothing to prove that there was any merit in him. He is an offender against God. His sole claim is his faith which is reckoned to him for righteousness. Hence we may say that to be justified by faith is equivalent to being accounted righteous before God. In fact, whilst in no passage in the Epistles does *δικαιοῦν* clearly mean make righteous, as if something was infused into sinners, there are signal instances where it can only

mean declare or treat as righteous (Rom. ii. 13, 1 Cor. iv. 4).

Let us now turn to the circumstances which ultimately led to the enunciation of the doctrine of justification by faith. Amongst the Jews, who were imbued with the thought that the Law given by God was supreme, the great ideal was to win righteousness and salvation by a strict observance of the Law. To be righteous was to obey the Law. But by our Lord's days this obedience had become mechanical. Their earnestness in the careful and punctilious observance of the Law was not to be doubted. But to their pathetic failure to live up to the spirit behind the Law they were blinded. Jesus perceived this dismal blindness of religious men, and put before them a higher ideal to love God with all their heart and mind, and soul and strength, and to love their neighbour as themselves. He taught them by the parable of the Prodigal Son that God received the son back into fellowship without waiting to see whether his repentance was genuine, that the father assumed by his son's return and by his trust and faith in him, that the son purposed to lead a changed life. The father therefore forgave the prodigal, or, to use legal language, justified him and treated him as righteous. There was a moment in the prodigal's life when he was forgiven. It was the beginning of a new life due to a change in the whole man. Nothing is told us of the prodigal's later life. The first step of this new life St. Paul was to call justification, whilst the life which followed it, he was to call the life of sanctification. In short, in the parable and in His teaching generally, Jesus called on the Jews for a personal attachment and devotion not to the Law, but to God who was Himself righteous and holy and Love.

How was this initial forgiveness to be stated in a form which would be definitely connected with the concept of Law? What was to be the significant attitude of a Jew who believed in the Law as divine, and yet desired the peace and assurance of forgiveness? To these questions St. Paul gave the answer in his doctrine of justification by faith, a doctrine which states in a forensic way that forgiveness of sins is associated with the initial step of the Christian life in baptism (1 Cor. vi. 11, 2 Cor. v. 17. Cf. Acts xxii. 16 and see p. 117). The answer was the outcome of the experience which befel him on his journey to Damascus and his consequent baptism. As a loyal and studious Jew, St. Paul knew the teaching of the Scriptures that righteousness and salvation and revelation were closely connected (Ps. xcvi. 2). He knew also that righteousness was held to proceed from God to man (Isa. liv. 17) and righteousness was a moral ideal (Rom. ix. 30, 31). He had striven to win peace and assurance as every ardent Jew strove to do by his own efforts and claimed that he advanced in the Jews' religion beyond his contemporaries and that as touching the righteousness which was in the Law he was found blameless (Gal. i. 14, Phil. iii. 6). But the greater his efforts the greater was his disaffection; the more he realised his failure to live up to the standard demanded by the Law, the greater his condemnation. All his endeavours were insufficient to attain righteousness. Through the Law came the knowledge of sin; the Law in him produced wrath; the commandment which was unto life was found by him to be unto death (Rom. iii. 20, iv. 15, vii. 10). But after his conversion the scales fell from his eyes. He found the peace for which he craved by surrendering himself to God and receiving

from Him the great free gift of His grace, the boon of forgiveness. In faith he threw himself on God, and God accepted him, justified him, acquitted him, though he gave no promise for the future. God treated him as righteous for no merit of his but solely on what Christ had done.

But more was revealed to the Apostle. He saw that a person who turned to God in faith was held to be righteous, even if he was ungodly (*ἀσεβής*) (Rom. iv. 5). Because of this startling statement that God justified the ungodly or offenders against God, justification has been taken to mean make righteous, and not declare righteous. We have given reasons for holding that such a meaning is not supported in the Gospels, or in the Epistles or philologically. God does not impart righteousness but declares men righteous. God treats us as righteous though we are not righteous, for He looks to the future and not to the past. Thus our Christian life begins with what has been termed a "legal fiction." But this does not invalidate the truth any more than the assumption we make when, in forgiving others, we assume that those forgiven can be influenced for good, however unworthy they are. As we treat offenders not for what they are, but for what we hope they will be, so does God. We forgive because we believe that the person forgiven can be changed. Thus St. Paul taught what the Gospels did. God gives His declaration of righteousness, that is His forgiveness, before the actual life of righteousness begins, namely, at the moment a person accepts Christianity and by faith attaches himself to Christ.

St. Paul further developed the concept of the righteousness of God. As a Jew he knew that righteousness

was of the essence of God and that it proceeded from God as a powerful active gift. It was a righteousness which is of God (ἐκ Θεοῦ). God was righteous in punishing sin (Rom. ii. 15), and in keeping His promises (Rom. iii. 3). But to St. Paul there was much more than this. The righteousness of God was manifested in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and more particularly in the death of Jesus by which God showed that though in times past He had dealt lightly with sin He, by the Cross, gave a signal proof of His antagonism to sin. The death of Jesus was a sacrifice through which the righteousness of God was available for all. It did not make men righteous, but treated them as if they were righteous.

St. Paul also realised what faith should mean. The Greek word πίστις may mean active trustfulness or passive trustworthiness. In the New Testament the active sense predominates. But just as πιστεύειν may mean merely to believe that a thing has been done, or to believe what is said by another, or to believe in a person (εἰς τινα), so πίστις has a variety of meanings, but in its deepest sense it is absolute perfect trust in a person. Faith in the phrase "justification by faith" is an active principle, a personal relationship, which implies not only that a person trusts wholly in God but, recognising that he is sinful, believes that Christ died for him, and that, apart from His death, he could not be delivered from the guilt of sin. He has no merit which he can plead. No work done by him to win God's favour (*proprio motu*) can win forgiveness. But it is not to a dead Christ that he clings, but to a living and risen Lord (Rom. x. 9).

We may note that St. Paul does not say that we are justified by faith alone. The Christian is called to service and to the manifestation of a forgiving spirit.

Activities in the Christian life are necessary. Lutherans, who interpreted the Pauline doctrine as justification by a bare faith, fell into the error known as "solifidianism." The Roman Church by interpreting the word "justify" to mean "make righteous" has overestimated the value of works as a means of gaining merit and forgiveness.

We may now sum up St. Paul's teaching on justification by faith. Once a person by an act of faith surrenders himself to God and accepts His forgiveness, he is declared righteous. The important moment is the moment of putting on Christ. This is the initial step of justification. That moment was, to St. Paul, the moment of baptism, in which by union with Christ he received remission of sins. Then in faith the person strives to live a life, known as the life of sanctification, lived under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a life of fellowship with God. Justification is the beginning of a process which ends in salvation.

GRACE, MERCY, AND FORGIVENESS.

Mercy may mean pity in helping those in distress, which is a duty of fellowship, or piety, as in Hosea, or be an attribute of God which is shown in saving men from sin. Jesus in His ministry twice used the phrase on which Hosea laid much stress, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. ix. 13, xii. 7). St. Paul, in a passage of unusual feeling, wrote how the mercy of God was seen in the Incarnation and Atonement. "But God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus :

that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 4-7).

This mercy God is ever ready to bestow on men whose need of it is continuous. He bestows it for our benefit and its aim is to make us worthy sons. In the parable of the Unmerciful Servant the misuse of mercy made the recipient unfit to receive forgiveness. The depth of God's mercy is realised if we, in turn, show it in our dealings with our fellow-men. We are to be as merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful.

Failure to manifest this spirit in human intercourse is to run contrary to God's purpose and to manifest ingratitude to God's saving grace. Unresponsiveness is followed by punishment, as the Unmerciful Servant learnt. This unresponsiveness is shown in hatred (1 John ii. 9, iii. 15).

God's mercy is ever ready to forgive but, lest it be misunderstood and be misinterpreted as a condoning of sin, the righteousness of God must be vindicated. He forgives our sins, and we are called upon to forgive others. But only on conditions, which are the proofs of righteousness. Because God's mercy is open to all men, the conditions of the granting of His mercy must affect all men, whether good or evil. Hence our response should include not only those whom we offend, but also those who offend us. This means that there are two conditions, the spirit of forgiveness, which is forgiving-ness, and repentance. As Amos taught that from Israel, His chosen race, God expected more than from others, so Jesus taught that in the new Israel God expected more than from those who were not in it.

By not forgiving, men deliberately and wilfully place

a barrier against the mercy which God is willing to bestow on them.

We may reach a similar conclusion when we consider forgiveness and the free grace of God. The Creator in His creation of conscious human beings aimed at the realisation of goodness by the gift of free will whereby men are capable of responding to Him and living in fellowship with Him who alone is good. With men, God's communion is never broken. Even before the Incarnation men knew of this continuous presence of God. "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. i. 5).

God's act of creation is an act of free grace, but it is at the same time redemptive. Redemption is the act of God. His will is righteous will. He has given us means to respond voluntarily and willingly to His righteousness. Man must of his own choice respond to the free grace of God, and in man's response all his activities must be involved.

We live in a world of beings, and God acts towards us not as impersonal force but as a fully personal activity directed impartially towards all men. He loves all alike. Our response to the righteousness and love of the divine Mind must be freely bestowed by us and in that response embrace all men, both those who wrong us, and those whom we wrong. The forgiving spirit and penitence, which are the conditions of the divine forgiveness when freely shown by us, are means whereby we maintain fellowship with Him who ever on His side keeps His covenant of love with the conscious beings He has made.

CHAPTER VI

REPENTANCE AND SIN IN THE GOSPELS

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND REPENTANCE.

IT is Mark alone of the Evangelists who states that John "preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." Now the Greek word for unto (*εἰς*) has the meaning "with a view to something in the future," and the whole phrase therefore means that, after baptism and repentance, the convert must wait for forgiveness of sins to be granted after the coming of the Messiah. The same sense is to be found in the liturgical hymn known as the Benedictus, composed long after John's birth.

"To give knowledge of salvation unto his people
In the remission of their sins."

"Knowledge of salvation" does not mean that John gave instruction on the remission of sins, but that he was instructing his hearers that salvation which was the special gift of Him who was "a horn of salvation" raised up by the Lord, the God of Israel (Luke i. 68-71), consisted in being delivered from the power of sin. This salvation was to be given not by him but by the Messiah.

But, according to Matthew, the baptism of John was a baptism unto repentance only. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance" (iii. 11). Baptism was the outward sign of repentance; the remission of sins was a characteristic of the Messianic kingdom.

"*Ἀφεσις*, says Dr. Swete, belongs properly to the Messianic kingdom in which it is associated with the baptism of the Spirit.

Mark, therefore, in speaking of John's baptism was using a phrase closely associated with Christian baptism, as if John's baptism was identical with it in every way except one, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The phrase (which is due to Mark and is not John's own words) shows Mark's tendency to throw back to an earlier date a Christian experience of the Apostolic age ; by its use here he makes John a forerunner of the Messiah in other ways than his preaching. The phrase would aptly describe one of the characteristics of Christian baptism, and when read by the Roman converts to whom Mark wrote his Gospel, over a generation after John's preaching, it would recall their own baptism into the Christian Church, at which they received, what John's baptism really did not give, forgiveness of sins. These converts, on reading the phrase in the Marcan gospel, would compare their baptism with that of John, and would recall that they had received one special gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was not given to those baptized by John.

Jesus, too, at the opening of His ministry omitted all reference to remission of sins. He, like John, called on the people to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt. iv. 17). According to Mark, His words were "The kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye and believe in the Gospel." There is very little difference between the two versions, except in the call to believe the good news. John's message was replete with warnings but that of Jesus was full of good news, which included a hope of the forgiveness of sins.

We must therefore examine the meaning attached to repentance by John the Baptist and by Jesus in His first preaching. It strikes us at once that repentance was called for because of the advent of the kingdom in the near future and not because the kingdom was already established. It was to fit and prepare them for its coming. It was a preparation, and it was preliminary to a future baptism with great gifts in store (Acts xix. 1-5).

John was acknowledged to be a prophet by all men (Mark xi. 32) ; he was a prophet not only in his teaching but also in his dress and mode of life ; like Elijah and Amos, he was a man of the wilderness ; like Amos and Hosea, he was a preacher of righteousness ; and like Isaiah and Ezekiel, he called on men to repent and to be washed. Isaiah had proclaimed the word of the LORD : " Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow " (i. 16, 17). The word of the LORD had come to Ezekiel ; " I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you " (xxxvi. 25). Thus, like Isaiah and like Ezekiel, John called on men for a moral purification, and required them to be " washed " or baptized. His aim was ethical. We see this clearly in Luke. To the multitudes who came to him, he said that they should share their clothing and their food, to the tax-gatherers that they should not extort more than was legal, to the soldiers that they should repress violence and be contented with their pay (Luke iii. 10-14). The sign of this particular change of mind was a ceremonial rite of

purification which was by no means novel to his hearers, for it was required from all Gentiles who became converts to Judaism.

The baptism required of John was a preparation for the coming kingdom and gave no gifts of grace. When the kingdom became a concrete reality, the Church, there would be a baptism for admission into it, and, to qualify for a baptism which gave remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit, the convert would need a repentance which was more than ethical. He must first accept Jesus as the Messiah. His repentance would be more than sorrow for moral wrongs ; it would be a turning away from sin.

The repentance required in John's baptism was thus ethical, and preliminary to the coming of the kingdom ; it was no deeper than the ideas of repentance prevalent at the time of John's preaching, which we are entitled to assume were those of the Old Testament. Repentance was impossible for sins done with a high hand, that is, for deliberate, presumptuous sins ; repentance brought no assurance of forgiveness, for there was no guarantee that God would forgive ; repentance was motivated by fear rather than love ; repentance did not include the forgiving of offenders. We find also that John warned his hearers of God's wrath, telling them of the danger of delay since judgment had already begun (Matt. iii. 7-10).

It will be clear, then, that the repentance which the Baptist called for could not have been identical with the repentance expected from those who desired to be actual members of the kingdom. The Baptist was not a member of the kingdom, and he that was least in the kingdom was greater than he. When John and Jesus

in His earliest preaching called on men to repent and be washed, they called only for a public act which put those who repented in the position of catechumens.

The two grades of repentance are exemplified in many a mission-field to-day, and the developed repentance with its effect is to be seen in the whole of the New Testament. For example, repentance unto the remission of sins, and not mere repentance of an ethical character, was required for admission into the Church in the early days of the Church, and one thousand were baptized unto remission of sins on a confession of faith that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts ii. 38, cf. iii. 19, v. 31) ; St. John in his Gospel, though he did not use the words forgiveness and repentance, wrote of a regenerated life, the new birth (iii. 3), a passage from death unto life (John v. 24, cf. 1 John iii. 14) ; to St. Paul it was a passage from one state to another, from slavery to sonship (Gal. iv. 5), from the power of Satan unto God (Acts xxvi. 18), and from darkness to light. The repentance, therefore, required for admission by baptism into membership of the kingdom of heaven and of the early Church was a definite act by which a convert "turned" from his past life of sin and surrendered himself to a new life of fellowship in which he would gradually be filled with all the graces of the Christian life (Eph. iv. 25-32). In later years the Christian would remember this definite step as a turning away from idols to serve the living God ; it would be a solemn memory of a new life begun with the indwelling of the Spirit.

The difference between the repentance preparatory to the coming of the kingdom, and the other for admission into the kingdom after its establishment may

be realised from the parable of the Prodigal Son, which deals fully with its Godward aspect (pages 149 ff.). The parable discloses our Lord's views of repentance in comparison with that of the Law and the prophets, which was the view of the Pharisees and scribes. In the parable there is an advance on the ethical repentance required by John and Jesus initially. It is a confession of sin, a separation from the past ; there is consciousness of sin against God, a return to the Father's family. It is a change from a life of sin to a Godward life. The intimate connexion with the prophetic standard lies in this, that here, as in the prophets and the Law, this new attitude and change of life is only considered in relation to God. The Shema did not include any reference to love for neighbours (page 285). Human forgiveness was a thing apart and its absence made no difference. It never entered the minds of prophets, scribes, and Pharisees that hatred of enemies was not in keeping with this new attitude to God. Christ was aware of this. "Ye have heard," said Jesus, addressing the disciples, "that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy : but I say unto you, Love your enemies."

Repentance is almost universally in modern thought understood as containing only the elements of the prodigal's repentance. New nomenclature is given nowadays to the parts of repentance, but in essentials there is no difference. That is to say that repentance as normally understood does not include the forgiving of others by the penitent as a condition precedent to forgiveness. Forgiving-ness is sometimes taught as an object of amendment or reparation after absolution. This difference of the position in which human forgive-

ness is put is a vital matter. This essay is an effort to restore human forgiveness to its rightful position as a condition which must be fulfilled either separately or as an element of repentance before God's forgiveness can be granted, or, if sacramental penance is accepted, before absolution should be pronounced, whatever sins be confessed. We ourselves hold that repentance without a forgiving attitude to men is unworthy of the name. Love of God and love of man are inseparable.

In the enlarged conception of repentance, taught in the parable of the Prodigal Son, there was one thing lacking. The forgiveness of his fellow-men did not come into repentance, and partly because of the absence of this one thing, repentance in Christ's teaching is never made the primary condition of divine forgiveness (pages 104, 144, 276). Christ put first and foremost the forgiveness of our fellow-man, and made repentance, as defined in the parable, a secondary condition of forgiveness. Nowhere did He specifically say that God forgave on repentance, though He stressed the necessity of it, but He did specifically say that He would only forgive on condition that the offended forgave his fellow-men, and this he reiterated more than once. In the famous parable, which was, it must be remembered, spoken to Pharisees and scribes, He taught them what their repentance in its Godward aspect should include. It was a further stage forward than the teaching of the prophets and the Law. But through the introduction of the unforgiving brother into the parable, He suggested to the Jews and scribes, who were outside the kingdom, that this repentance lacked one element, namely, the forgiveness of offenders. But to the disciples He could be more explicit. To them, who were within the kingdom

and could say the Lord's Prayer, He could teach that in repentance, and as an essential to it, there must be forgiveness of offenders before they could obtain the forgiveness of God. Repentance with precedent human forgiveness was the condition of divine forgiveness. Repentance without anterior human forgiveness will not be forgiven by God.

We may say that repentance is presented to us in the Gospels in three grades, of which the third is the only repentance worthy of the name.

1. An ethical preparation for the coming kingdom.
2. An enlargement of the teaching of the Law and the prophets exemplified in the Prodigal Son, but with no reference to the spirit of forgiving-ness. Repentance here is a change of attitude to God.
3. The true and only Christian form which includes very essentially and as prior to divine forgiveness the forgiveness of our fellow-men. This is manifested by penitents possessed by the spirit of forgiveness. This is the only true repentance, for it is motivated by love of God and love of men.

Now repentance, as generally taught and understood even in our own times, is of the second type. We have therefore retained this meaning of the word in order that the importance of forgiving-ness may be stressed. But as we shall next proceed to argue, repentance should include forgiving-ness. The change of mind should be both Godward and manward. In this case, there is only one condition of divine forgiveness.

THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE.

No single parable will enable us to define what repentance (*μετάνοια*) means, for by its very nature a parable presents us with only one aspect of truth. In order that we may know the true meaning of repentance, we must turn to two parables of great value. The parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us that one part of the meaning of repentance is a turning Godward which includes contrition, confession, and amendment, but there is a hint in the parable that there is another part suggested by the absence of a forgiving spirit in the elder brother's attitude towards the prodigal. In the second parable, that of the Unmerciful Servant, whilst forgiveness is emphasised as essential for forgiveness, there is a reference to the other part of the meaning of repentance for the king's creditor has cried for mercy, promising to repay his debt. When we combine the teaching of these two parables, we are presented with a clear definition of what Christian repentance means. It is a change of mind towards God and towards man. It is not only a change Godward, but also manward. Further, the manward change must take into consideration not only those whom we offend, but also those who offend us. The importance of our attitude towards those who do us wrong is of vital importance. The late Dr. Plummer in his notes on the parable of the Unmerciful Servant wrote these pertinent words: "We are told that the king was angry, and this is the main lesson of the parable. An unforgiving spirit is sure to provoke the anger of God; so much so, that His free forgiveness of sinners ceases to flow to them, when in this way we offend. . . . For we are not apt to think of what seems to be a merely

negative quality, the absence of a forgiving temper, as a fatal sin. There are many sins which we rightly regard as heinous, breaches of the sixth, or seventh, or eighth commandments. But we are not accustomed to think that to treasure up the recollection of injuries which we think that we have received from others may be a sin that is greater than these" (*St. Matthew*, p. 257).

Thus we hold that such phrases as "Love towards God is the foundation of true penitence," and "In the parable of the Prodigal Son Jesus draws a picture of the true penitent," are insufficient, for they are lacking in a fundamental particular. They overlook the attitude of the sinner towards those who may have wronged him. Repentance, as generally defined, does not include the element of forgiving-ness on which our Lord laid peremptory emphasis. *Μετάνοια* must include love for God and love for all men, be they those whom we have wronged or those who wrong us. If repentance is thus defined, there is only one condition of forgiveness from God. "It is indeed misleading to say that Christ proclaims forgiveness upon the sole condition of repentance unless we remember how inclusive a term repentance is. . . . God's forgiveness is restoration to intimate fellowship with God; but fellowship with God is fellowship with self-forgetful and self-giving Love, of which forgiveness is a necessary outcome. If we do not forgive, we are not in fellowship with God. The repentance, which is the condition of God's free forgiveness, is a turning away from our selfish outlook and the adoption of God's outlook, from which forgiveness necessarily proceeds" (Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 264 f.).

To sum up, repentance, in our view, must be motivated not only by love for God but for all men. Any repentance

to be worthy of the name must include a forgiving attitude, active to redeem those who trespass against us. We hold that without this forgiving attitude, repentance will not gain for Christians the forgiveness of God. Repentance, if true and real, must include (a) sorrow for wrong-doing, (b) a turning away from the evil, sinful nature which prompts us to acts of positive wrong-doing, and also (c) a turning away from the selfish attitude, which leads us to negative acts of wrong-doing, to a self-giving and redemptive attitude towards those who offend us.

Jesus and Sin.—We may at this stage of our study remind ourselves that the subject before us is not the forgiveness of sin but the forgiveness of sins. The former subject is cosmic ; it deals with the problem how all mankind and God may be at one, not how an individual man may through forgiveness of his sins continue the union with Christ which was effected by baptism. Hence theories of the Atonement, which are concerned more with the manner in which the guilt of sin has been removed, use such terms as justification, satisfaction, reconciliation, and redemption rather than the simple term forgiveness. Our concern is not with theories of Atonement for the sin of the world, but with the more limited and personal problem of the individual's need of forgiveness and of the conditions on which individual forgiveness may be obtained. Of the terms used in theories on the Atonement, justification, the being declared righteous, has a personal reference. The righteousness of the Christian is not that of the Law, but is more personal ; it is a righteousness of faith. St. Paul prefers to speak of justification rather than of forgiveness, because he has found that justification has

a wider meaning. Justification means not only that the sinner has been forgiven, but also that he has been pronounced righteous. St. Paul saw, as Jesus did, that reformation of life could only come through a personal relationship, that is, through faith (pages 111-117).

Jesus, unlike St. Paul, has no theory of the origin of sin or of original sin. He was no theorist, but a realist. Sin was in the world, and He knew it ; He accepted it as a fact. There was no one that was good—except God ; the publican who prayed “ God, be merciful to me a sinner ” was the one who was justified. Jesus came, as His name implies, to conquer sin, and not to theorise about it.

Jesus was a prophet ; Jesus was a layman, not a priest. He had little to say of the priestly legislation with its sacrifices and rules of sacrifice, however important they were to the religious thought and practice of His age. To the sin-offering and the guilt-offering He is not reported to have made any reference. In fact, He laid down that He was in the line not of priestly teaching but of prophetic teaching by quoting as His own view the words, “ I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” Ethics were more important to Him than ritual observance. To the limited forgiveness which was possible on the Day of Atonement He was apparently indifferent. The spiritual and ethical requirements of religion, not the ritual observance of the codes or the traditional interpretation of them, were His special concern. His view of sin was in keeping with this attitude. Nowhere in His recorded utterances is there a distinction drawn between unintentional sins and sins done with a high hand ; all sins are forgivable except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit ; and unforgiving-ness, we believe, is an

example of the spirit or state of this one unforgivable sin (pages 167 ff.) ; nowhere is there a distinction between grades of sin, between mortal sin and venial sin, between sins of thought and sins of overt acts ; nowhere does He teach that sin is only the transgression of the Law. But He recognised the universality of sin, its damaging power, its deadly venom, its insidious growth. Hence His companionship with sinners ; with them He mingled so freely that He was known as the friend of publicans and sinners.

But who were these "sinners" ? There are three possible explanations. The term may stand for Gentiles in contrast with Jews ; it was used in this sense by St. Paul, " we who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles " (Gal. ii. 15), and by our Lord in the Garden when He said, " the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners " (Mark xiv. 41). Again, the term may be used for those Jews who were lax in the observance of the Law and were therefore legally unrighteous and ceremonially unclean ; no immoral meaning would necessarily attach here. Lastly, the term may be used in an ethical sense as meaning those who led unsatisfactory moral lives, with whom the Rabbis would not deem it fit to hold social intercourse and to sit at meals. This last is clearly the meaning to be attached to the sinner in the parable of the sinful woman (Luke vii. 37), and in the three parables of Luke xv., and in Mark viii. 38, where we read that Christ spoke of " this adulterous and sinful generation." Because Christ was a friend of sinners we need not libel the Synagogue by thinking that it was at enmity with repentant sinners ; but our Lord's friendship with these despised persons was a beautiful thing. Even those who felt themselves

righteous, the Pharisees, were in His eyes sinners, and for them, too, there was room for repentance. And when we read that Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners," let us understand that He was speaking in irony. He did not mean that He came only to save "sinners" and not those who called themselves righteous.

Jesus taught no doctrine of sin, but He used analogies to explain His view of sin; two of them were mentioned on occasions of social intercourse. He was once partaking of a meal either in the house of Levi or in the house in Capernaum where He usually stayed; the party included tax-gatherers, sinners, and His followers, of whom were the five whom He had already called to discipleship. This companionship of Jesus with outcasts was noticed by "scribes of the Pharisees," professional interpreters of the Law belonging to the sect of the Pharisees (we never hear of scribes of the Sadducees), and very exact in their observance of the Law and their interpretation of it. On observing Christ with His strange guests, these scribes exclaimed in surprise, "He eateth with publicans and sinners!" When Jesus heard the remark, He quoted a popular saying, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Sin, therefore, was a disease of the soul, but a disease which was not incurable (Mark ii. 15-17).

The second occasion was when some Pharisees and scribes saw some of the disciples of Jesus eat bread "with defiled, that is, unwashed hands." The details as given in Mark vii. 1-23 are a composite structure, and include utterances of our Lord on other occasions; the immediate answer of Jesus follows the observation of the

critics, "Why walk not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands?" Then Jesus replied, "There is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man" (Mark vii. 1, 2, 5, 14, 15).

The controversy was concerned with ceremonial uncleanness, not with hygiene. In primitive life the institution of the taboo had permeated religion, and this negative idea of holiness had left its mark on the Judaism even of our Lord's time. The strict Jews aimed to be "holy" at all times by avoiding that which was "unclean"; before partaking of a meal they practised ritual ablutions according to the Pharisaic tradition. In this controversy the question debated was whether things or only persons were unclean, and whether persons were ceremonially or spiritually defiled by contact with things held to be "unclean." Our Lord contradicted the Jewish standpoint and the Law on this matter, and laid down a new principle. His dictum was "The things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man." Sin was not like a physical stain that could be washed away by lustration or ablution; it was internal, its source was the heart.

This teaching of Christ is consonant with that of His Sermon on the Mount. The Jewish ideal was to be ceremonially exact in what was done: sin was breach of the Law and was manifested by acts. But to Jesus sin was more than act; sin could be committed by thought and emotion. To be angry with a brother was a sin of murder; to look on a woman to lust after her was to commit adultery in the heart.

Sin was also a debt due to God, as in the version of

the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. The Greek word *ὀφείλημα* in classical literature meant a financial debt, but in the New Testament it is used figuratively for an obligation of a moral and spiritual nature as well. For example, "We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was *our duty* to do," *ὁ ὀφείλομεν ποιῆσαι πεποιήκαμεν* (Luke xvii. 10). So also St. Paul: "He is a debtor to the whole law" (Gal. v. 3).

Sin, to Jesus, was therefore a disease to be healed, a moral pollution to be cleansed, a debt to be cancelled. It was spiritual and ethical failure, it was opposition to the known law of God in thought, word, and deed. The pollution could be removed by the Father, the disease healed by Him, and the debt cancelled by Him through the co-operation of the sinner with God. Certain conditions had to be fulfilled for the cure and the cleansing and the cancelling; then, all the diseases of soul would be healed by "wholesome medicines," the pollution washed by a spiritual cleansing, and the debt to God cancelled.

The fourth analogy is given us by St. John. It is that sin is slavery. "Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin" (viii. 34). To live a life of sin is therefore bondage to sin and not freedom. The sinner is unlike a son who abides in the house, and it is the Son alone who can give sinners their freedom.

In the Prodigal Son we get something more than an analogy. The son chose to go into a far country, and there live the life of a libertine. It was his deliberate act. Sin therefore is an act of the will. So it is in a true repentance; the son when he came to himself said, "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke xv. 18).

There is one other point in our Lord's teaching on sin

which is of great importance. He had no grades of sin. A sin of thought was as much a sin as an act. His revision of the Old Testament view of sin is given us in the Sermon on the Mount. He did not classify sins, as did many of the Fathers of the Church, neither did He teach that the petition of the Lord's Prayer limited trespass to the failings of men which are of daily occurrence. " Plainly in His eyes, pride, avarice, contempt, and selfishness are at least as bad as fornication or violence. . . . Indeed, spiritual sins, such as pride, Jesus saw to be harder to repent of than the more scandalous " (Gore, *The Philosophy of the Good Life*, p. 180).

CHAPTER VII

THE LORD'S PRAYER

APOCRYPHAL and Apocalyptic literature, as we have seen, contained teaching on both divine and human forgiveness. In the Wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach or *Ecclesiasticus*, it is said, "Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done thee ; and then thy sins shall be pardoned when thou prayest " (Ecclus. xxviii. 2) ; neighbour, however, was not interpreted to mean any human being. The Talmud says, " God forgives him who forgives his neighbour." In the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs we read, " If a man sin against thee . . . and if he repent and confess, forgive him " (Gad. vi. 3-7).

Jesus of Nazareth more than emphasised the precept of Jesus the son of Sirach. He transfigured it, lived it, and went beyond it. He underlined it not only by making the precept a part of a prayer to be said " always," not only by applying it universally and thereby giving a wider meaning to the word "neighbour," but also by giving great significance to it in the corollary attached to the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. " For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses " (Matt. vi. 14, 15).

Jesus when He taught His Prayer was speaking of life within the kingdom, entrance to which involved a new relationship, that of a son to a Father, and gave

the right of praying to God as Father and of using the Lord's Prayer. This new life involved duties towards the Father and His children, the brethren. In this new Israel, a man might sin either against his Father or against his brother ; but as a sin, such as a quarrel, a loss of honour, or a theft, affected the whole family, so a sin against God or man would affect both God and man. Now if sins against a father or a brother in an earthly family can be dealt with independently of each other, repentance by restoring the broken relationship with the person offended will suffice to heal the breach ; but if any sin cannot be so treated, repentance will not suffice. So in the divine family God cannot forgive a son who is at enmity with his brother. The family cannot be a divine family if there is a spirit of discord in it. The Fatherhood of God involves the brotherhood of man ; they cannot be separated one from the other. In prophetic days God's forgiveness was held to be independent of human forgiveness. Jeremiah as we saw (page 49) pleaded for forgiveness from God by repentance, but he could not forgive his persecutors : " O LORD of hosts, that judgeth righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see Thy vengeance on them : for unto Thee have I revealed my cause " (xi. 20). But with Jesus such an independent treatment of forgiveness was unbearable. He broke down the " wall of partition," and taught that forgiveness from God was impossible unless the sinner in his turn practised not only repentance but also forgiving-ness ; the change of mind must include love of God and love of man.

But further, the Friend of publicans and sinners enlarged the scope of forgiveness. The Christian, the man who can pray " Our Father," has to be Christlike.

He has to show this spirit of forgiveness not only to a brother in the family of God but to every one, be the offender a Christian or an unbeliever. The Christlike standard is that of Him who on the Cross prayed for unbelievers in Him; "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do"; and those for whom Christ prayed showed no signs of repentance.

Forgiveness of man is an indispensable and precedent condition of the forgiveness of God. This is borne out by the teaching of the parables of Jesus in the Gospels and, we hope, by the rationale of forgiveness (Chapters XII.-XV.). It is a trite but a necessary reminder that no single parable contains the whole gospel of forgiveness, but that the parables help to illuminate a pregnant utterance of His. This pregnant utterance is the petition in the Lord's Prayer, with its very pertinent corollary.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"Our Father . . . Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. . . ."

Its Corollary.—"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. vi. 9-15).

Luke's version of the petition runs thus: "Father . . . Forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luke xi. 1-4).

Mark does not contain the Lord's Prayer, but has a clear reference to the condition of forgiveness.

"And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark xi. 25).

In the Epistles the same thought finds expression. "Forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eph. iv. 32).

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. iii. 13).

One of the differences between the versions of the petition is that Luke has ἁμαρτίας (sins) whilst Matthew has ὀφειλήματα (debts). The word in Matthew may be nearer the original Aramaic, for Luke in the latter part of the clause uses the verb, παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν.

The important difference is, however, in the condition. Luke has καὶ γὰρ while Matthew has ὡς καὶ, and the latter version may suggest a kind of bargain, that God may forgive us in proportion to the forgiveness we mete to others. Luke gets rid of this possible misunderstanding. It has also been suggested that the original form of the petition read "Remit to us, and we also will remit" and that therefore the petitioner prayed for forgiveness, promising that he will forgive. This teaching is contrary to the teaching elsewhere, that human forgiveness precedes the divine, as in Mark xi. 25, and the corollary to the Lord's Prayer quoted above and also in the Unmerciful Servant, and therefore may be discarded. It is also retrograde teaching, for such a spirit is inferior to that of *Ecclesiasticus* and the Talmud.

The fact that the same term "remission" is used whether God forgives or Christ forgives or man forgives shows that divine forgiveness and human forgiveness are analogous.

Mark's reference is instructive. The whole passage uniting the words "Our Father, which art in heaven," with the reference to the condition for divine forgiveness

is undoubtedly an echo of the Lord's Prayer. Yet its greater significance lies in the circumstances of the Roman Church to whom the Gospel was written. The Christians in Rome were undergoing untold horrors of persecution and martyrdom, and yet they were being reminded that, if they were to obtain forgiveness from God, they must forgive their persecutors. Forgiveness was to be the greatest test of their faith.

The references in the Epistles carry on the same thought as in the Lord's Prayer. The Church addressed as a corporate body, is called to practise forgiveness, *χαρίζεσθαι*, as God acting in Christ forgave them. It is the same motive as that taught in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt. xviii. 21-35).

Hitherto, as we have seen, divine forgiveness and human forgiveness had moved on parallel independent lines. The prophets had seen no connexion between them. One apocryphal writer and certain Rabbis had to some extent realised the connexion, but it was Jesus who made it a necessary part of one's daily prayer and life, and emphasised that divine forgiveness was contingent on human forgiveness. He had suggested it in His teaching to Pharisees. But in teaching His disciples, Jesus united divine forgiveness and human forgiveness in a bond so close, so perfect, and so indissoluble, that to separate the one from the other was tantamount to putting asunder that which God had joined together.

Let us examine this petition in the Lord's Prayer in further detail.

1. No critical study of the texts of the Gospels has pronounced that it is not an integral part of the Prayer ; some of the clauses of the Prayer have not the support that is given to this one, as is shown to English readers

by the text of the Prayer in Luke with the marginal notes thereon. Luke's version of the Prayer is, " Father, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins ; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation " (xi. 2-4). We cannot fail also to realise the significance of the mention of this one petition in Mark when no other petition is recalled in his whole Gospel.

2. This petition is the only one in the Prayer to which a condition is attached. The condition was new and revolutionary. This one circumstance shows the importance attached to the condition by our Lord. He enforced a truth of definite and practical importance in Christian soteriology.

3. " Forgive us our trespasses " by itself would have been sufficient as a prayer for forgiveness, if Jesus had merely meant to keep before the disciples and all Christians the necessity of gaining forgiveness.

4. No distinction is made between grave and light sins, though such a distinction was drawn in the early Church which classified sins as " mortal " and " venial," and made the petition in the Lord's Prayer apply only to venial sins.

5. The condition laid down is to be interpreted in the light of Christ's teaching. Elsewhere He taught " If thy brother sin, rebuke him ; if he repent, forgive him " (Luke xvii. 3, 4). The condition therefore must be guided by the principles of Christian ethics. The moral law requires that before forgiveness is bestowed by the offended, repentance must be shown by the offender, that reproof and rebuke should not be withheld. The same requirements of ethics are made in *Matthew* xviii.

15-22 in the case of a community dealing with a wrongdoer. Human forgiveness is to be unlimited, but subject to the moral law. As the divine forgiveness is conditional, so also is human forgiveness. The condition in the Prayer is fulfilled therefore by the possession of a forgiving spirit. The petitioner must be ever ready to forgive and to pray for the offender. Jesus and Stephen showed such a spirit. The forgiving spirit must include all men, even enemies.

6. Jesus did not do away with repentance by His insistence on human forgiveness, but He taught that forgiving-ness must be present concomitantly with repentance or that repentance must be true before God's forgiveness will be granted.

7. The Lord's Prayer, with the exceptional condition attached to the petition for forgiveness, was taught before His death on the Cross. In other words, before His Atonement for the sin of mankind, a member of the Church by fulfilling His conditions could obtain the forgiveness of God. The Atonement showed us the basis or grounds for forgiveness. Jesus forgave the paralytic and the sinful woman in Simon's house during His active ministry, and forgiveness was bestowed by God in days before Jesus lived on earth.

8. The uniqueness of the condition was emphasised by our Lord's corollary to it. The terms of the corollary are given both positively and negatively, a sign of the fundamental and supreme importance of forgiving-ness before forgiven-ness. There is no uncertain voice about the corollary: it is clear, definite, authoritative, and final.

9. The corollary also tells us, particularly by its negative clause, that a penitent to prove worthy of being

forgiven must possess something of the very nature of the Great Forgiver. To deserve forgiveness, the spirit of the Forgiver must be there. It is the nature and property of God to forgive, and His children must in this respect be perfect as the Father. The proof of our Love for God is our love for man.

The petition in the Lord's Prayer is therefore unique both in its construction and its application. God, the offended, and the offender form a trinity of forgiveness ; no at-one-ment with God is possible without an at-one-ment between man and man. Love of God and love of man are inseparable.

We conclude, therefore, from the Lord's Prayer, that whatever other conditions may be necessary for divine forgiveness, there is an indispensable condition anterior to confession on which Jesus placed supreme emphasis. Man must forgive his fellow-men before God can forgive him. To refuse to forgive is to be unforgiven by God.

" Man ought not to expect to receive what he is not ready to give—it is good discipline to lay this to heart " (Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, p. 96).

Because of the special reference made by Jesus to this condition of forgiving-ness, because it was new teaching then and is imperfectly realised and practised to-day, because it is a partaking of the nature and property of God, because it is evidence of the possession of a spirit of unselfishness which is displayed to those who have done wrong to us, we call this condition primary (page 104).

CHAPTER VIII

TEACHING BY PARABLES, MIRACLES, AND SAYINGS

WE propose in this chapter and the next to give detailed examination to incidents and sayings in which there is teaching on forgiveness. Clearly, as we deal with each instance, various facets of the jewel which is beyond price will reflect various aspects. It will appear, as we advance in our inquiry, that forgiveness, whether divine or human, means the same thing, complete and unlimited restoration to fellowship and friendship, but grounded on moral law.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT (Matt. xviii. 21-35).

The condition laid down in the Lord's Prayer and its corollary is no less clearly taught in this parable. The occasion of the parable was a question put to our Lord by Peter, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" Peter was troubled about a brother he had in mind; it was probably Judas Iscariot, who seemed to have led a clique amongst the twelve disciples. Peter had borne patiently some wrong which had been repeatedly inflicted on him, and his patience had been tried. Now, it was held by Jewish tradition that forgiveness was limited to three times. Support for it was found in the prophet Amos, "Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of Damascus, yea, for four, I will not turn away the

punishment thereof" (i. 3; cf. i. 6, 9, 11, 13; ii. 1, 4, 6): also was it not said in Job, "Lo, all these things doth God work, Twice, yea thrice, with a man?" (xxxiii. 29). Peter had, however, learned something from being in Christ's company; he went further than the Jewish tradition, and suggested seven times as the limit of forgiveness and forbearance. Our Lord's reply showed that Peter had something still to learn, and that he had not yet understood either the Lord's Prayer or its corollary. With a probable reminiscence of Lamech's boastful song to be avenged seventy-and-sevenfold, Jesus replied that there should be no limit to human forgiveness. "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." In the kingdom of heaven, there was no limit to be placed on human forbearance, patience, and forgiveness. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king who resolved to settle accounts with his servants. One man owed him ten thousand talents (a talent is about £240) and could not pay his debt; he therefore pleaded with the king, praying for forbearance and promising to repay the whole debt. The king then forgave him and the debt. The debtor, in his turn, was a creditor; a fellow-servant owed him a paltry debt of one hundred pence (a penny is about 8½d.) and to him the king's debtor went, seized him by the throat, and demanded payment. The plea for patience and a promise to pay was of no avail, and this small debtor was cast into prison. The news was brought to the king, who thereupon handed the unforgiving servant to the torturers till he should pay his whole debt. "So shall also My heavenly Father," concluded Jesus, "do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

The emphasis is laid once more on forgiving-ness, a fundamental condition of divine forgiveness. The lesson of the parable was clear enough without the conclusion, but its inclusion shows the importance Jesus attached to it.

The parable also teaches us the severity of God's love against selfishness. Not that the king desired the unforgiving servant to be punished, but the servant by his want of love and unwillingness to forgive brought down on himself the wrath of the king. God's love has its stern side ; it is antagonistic to self-interestedness.

The punishment of "unforgiven-ness" is the reward of an unforgiving temper—"for if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The king's debtor craved for mercy, but he could not forgive his fellow-man ; he failed to stand the supreme test of forgiveness and was condemned. The offended man who fails to forgive the offender is *ipso facto* condemning himself ; he has rendered himself incapable and unfit to receive forgiveness from God by deliberately cherishing a spirit of unforgiving-ness. He who wishes to receive forgiveness must first be an agent of forgiveness.

The relative value of the amount of the two debts shows us that our debt to God is incalculable, for our sins are not only the "mortal" sins of grievous and shameful nature, not only the "venial" sins, those little things we do and say which we ought not to do and say, those secret evil thoughts on which we dwell, but also those irritations which we manifest unconsciously. And these sins, "mortal" and "venial" and "unconscious," were not differentiated in our Lord's teaching.

Lastly, Jesus teaches that there is no difference in character between divine and human forgiveness. They are analogous.

SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN.

Peter was taught the truth that there should be no limit to our forgiveness of others. Very much the same language is found in Luke. "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke xvii. 3, 4).

The passage in Luke has points of contact with Peter's question to Jesus, "How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" Indeed, it is a parallel version of the question and answer in Matthew, which led up to the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. Luke knew a form of words which had turned Peter's question into a statement of Jesus Himself. In any case, the "seven times" in the light of Matthew's text can only mean an unlimited number of times.

In Luke's version there is a condition attached. "If he repent, forgive him." Does this mean that the offender is to be cast out as beyond the pale if he does not repent? Jesus did not say so. The answer is that Luke's version is a parallel version of Matt. xviii. 15 ff. and should be interpreted in the light thrown by the latter, and by the general teaching of our Lord. The passage in Matthew shows clearly that the offended person is not to rest content with the offender's attitude; he must seek to win his enemy. Forgiveness is positive and ethical, and must aim at the offender's good. Or as

St. Paul put it : " If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Thus, if the offender does not repent, we are not to retaliate, but do all we can to win him back and to soften his heart. Experience tells us that such active sympathy and absence of ill-will can win an offender back to fellowship. Human forgiveness, therefore, must be directed to rousing the offender's conscience. It must not ignore the evil that is in the wrong-doer. By reproof and rebuke the offender must be taught that forgiveness is not weak charitableness ; and because forgiveness must be restorative and curative, if it is to be of value, the offended should wait for repentance from the wrong-doer as a condition of restoration to fellowship. Forgiveness will be valueless if it ceases to be ethical.

Forgiving-ness involves the repressing of a spirit of vengeance and resentment, and must be directed towards the reformation of the offender's character. It would be as immoral to ignore the sin as it would be to condone it.

The necessity of repentance and the place for reproof must be compared with the teaching of the Levitical code and of the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (pages 60, 90 f.).

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON (Luke xv. 11-32.).

This is one of a trilogy of parables, of which the other two are the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. But whilst the two latter parables show us the shepherd and the woman searching for what each has lost, the former shows us the sinner's share in the work of grace, since the

prodigal takes the step which brings him back to his family. The Parable of the Prodigal Son therefore is not the whole gospel of love ; there is no part assigned in it to the Incarnate Son who was sent by the Father to seek and save those who were lost, nor are we told of the Father's share in the misery of the son. Undoubtedly this omission is partly rectified, if we may use the word, in the Parable of the Lost Sheep, where the shepherd goes out in search of the sheep ; but even so, the trilogy of parables does not teach the whole gospel of forgiveness. Even in the most personal of them, where we meet not with a lost sheep or a lost coin, but with a lost son, there is no mention of the prodigal's concern for those who shared in his downfall and sin.

In the parable there are two parts, and each part is full of meaning. We have in the first an analysis of repentance, teaching us what true repentance includes ; in the second, which brings in the unforgiving brother, we have teaching similar to that of the Lord's Prayer and the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. The elder brother is self-centred, and his selfishness is like that of the king's debtor. The father with his love, the prodigal son with his repentance, and the elder brother with an unforgiving spirit are the three chief actors of the drama, and to neglect the part played by any one of them will give a false interpretation of it. There are other actors, but they play minor parts in it, the citizen of that far-off country who found work for the prodigal, those wasters who helped the prodigal to squander his inheritance, the harlots who helped to further the prodigal's downfall, the servants of the prodigal's home.

The fact that Jesus spoke this parable to the Pharisees and scribes is of importance. They believed that God

forgave a sinner who repented, and they held certain views on repentance and forgiveness. Hence the parable with its emphasis on repentance would convey a special message. Jesus was giving a wider and deeper interpretation of the teaching of the Law and the prophets. His Jewish hearers would realise that, in this new teaching, wilful deliberate sin was forgiven by God ; that the sin of uncleanness was washed away, not by mechanical means, but by the purifying power of love ; that the violation of the laws of purity was within the range of forgiveness. They would also perceive that forgiveness was not uncertain but assured, and that the motive power of forgiveness was love, not fear. They would also learn that Jesus suggested, though He did not clarify it, that there was a place for human forgiveness in the scheme of God's forgiveness. Jesus revealed deeper truths to the inner circle of His disciples, though He would not reveal them in their completeness to His opponents (Mark iv. 11, 12). He did not reveal the full implications of forgiving-ness to the Pharisees and scribes because they were outside the kingdom.

In this parable Jesus widened the prophetic teaching on repentance. The details of the prodigal's act of repentance and his penitence, give the following constituent elements of a true repentance :

1. The consciousness of sin ; " He came to himself."
2. An act of will ; " I will arise and go to my father."
3. A confession of sin ; " I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight."
4. Self-abasement ; " I am no more worthy to be called thy son."

5. Act of separation from the past ; “ He arose, and came to his father.”
6. Willingness to bear punishment ; “ Make me as one of thy hired servants.”

This analysis shows that repentance concerns only two parties, the offended and the offender ; the prodigal is concerned with his own fall from grace, his own need of pardon and forgiveness, his own restoration to the family, his own reception. There is no reference in it to the fate of the companions who shared his licence, or of the harlots ; there is no mention of their responsibility and of their guilt ; there is no hint of forgiveness requested by them or bestowed on them. In fact, the parable, as a whole, shows us the one-sidedness of repentance, invaluable though it is in the scheme of forgiveness. But while the share of the companions and harlots in the joy of restoration is omitted, the meaning of forgiving-ness is not. It is shown by the father of the prodigal ; and its necessity in the dealing of brother with brother is illustrated in the concluding part of the story which, though outside the scope of the prophetic teaching of repentance, was introduced into the parable. This addition seems to mar the happiness of the family, for the attitude of the elder brother strikes a jarring note in the family rejoicings with which the father desired to welcome the prodigal.

Why was the elder brother introduced ? There is one answer which is reasonable. Our Lord's listeners, to whom the Law and the prophets were the media of God's revelation, did not connect forgiving-ness with divine forgiveness. Jesus desired to lead them towards a new revelation by an incident which portrayed an

elder brother who would not forgive. Jesus did not develop the theme. He did not conclude with the elder brother's change of heart, but with the father's appeal to him. The elder brother was the type of a self-righteous Pharisee. He thought himself perfect as many a Pharisee was inclined to do: "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine." He was like the young man who had kept the commandments from his youth up (Mark x. 20; Matt. xix. 20; Luke xviii. 21): he was like the Pharisee who in the Temple informed God in prayer, "I thank Thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers" (Luke xviii. 11). The incident of the elder brother might well be entitled "The Parable of the Unforgiving Son." It would seem that Jesus was prompted to insert it into the main parable lest He should leave unmentioned that human forgiveness came into the scheme of divine forgiveness; as the offended father forgave, so should the brother who thought he was offended have forgiven.

One point then is clear from this parable; repentance has its part to play in the scheme of forgiveness, but repentance, Jesus hinted, is not the only thing needful. We cannot build a theory of forgiveness and make repentance the one essential condition on this one parable alone, forgetting either the definite teaching in the Lord's Prayer or in its corollary, or in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, or in our Lord's words on the Cross. A theory can only be formulated after a survey of all Christ's teaching; it cannot merely be deduced from a single parable. To take an illustration, we may consider the case of the penitent thief. We dare not infer from that incident that an eleventh-hour

repentance would indubitably get the penitent to Paradise. Yet there are many Christians who live with the conviction that a death-bed repentance is enough for salvation, and that a last-minute repentance for a careless, selfish, and immoral life in which God had no claims on their devotion, their time, or their money would cancel the debt they owed to God.

Again, the central figure in the parable is the father. The father forgives because he loves. He separates the sinner from his sin. The father wants his son and receives him back into the family without any reservation. He treats the sin of the lost son on his return as if it had never been. This does not mean that the sin of the lost son did not bring its own punishment. The money was wasted and gone, and could never be recovered; the memories of the wasted days and of the wrong done to others would remain, but they would henceforth be remedial. We speak of this parable as the Parable of the Prodigal Son. In a sense, this is not accurate though it is popular. The chief character in it is not the prodigal, but the father. If we realise this, we shall see that the main teaching of the parable is not about repentance, but the love of the father manifested in forgiveness. The parable might more correctly be entitled the Parable of the Loving Father.

Further, the prodigal son in his confession said, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." If this utterance has any meaning, as it needs must, it is clear that in the view of Jesus the sin of the prodigal in leaving his home and wasting his substance in riotous living was not only a sin against the earthly father whom he had dishonoured, but also a sin against heaven—that is to say, against God, whose honour he had

besmirched. In other words, a sin against our fellow-men, be they members of our family or the companions of libertinism, is a sin against God as well as against men. This view is found in the Old Testament (pages 12, 65).

We have referred to the harlots and other companions in the sin of the prodigal. The criticism has been made that the omission of all reference to their part in the scheme of forgiveness has marred the beauty of an otherwise incomparable story. This criticism would be justified if we held that the parable was the whole gospel of forgiveness, but we do not find the complete gospel in this one parable any more than in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. We get in any one parable only one or more parts of the whole gospel; and in the Parable of the Prodigal Son there are three principles in the scheme of forgiveness which are illuminated with varying degrees of brilliance—the meaning of Godward repentance, the nature of forgiveness, and the need of practising forgiveness. Just as prominence is given by Jesus in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant to the place of forgiveness in the divine scheme of salvation, so in the Parable of the Prodigal Son prominence is given to the meaning of repentance.

Though the companions of the prodigal's sin are not mentioned in the scheme of forgiveness, yet their position is in no whit different from that of the "hero" of the parable. They have sinned and they, too, must repent. They have aided and abetted the waster in his profligate life, and they are responsible for their reception of the prodigal's influence. No plea of innocence can avail them. They must also forgive though they have been wronged by the prodigal.

There is one practical issue which needs mention in any study of this parable. The father never ceased to love the prodigal. He stands for all earthly fathers as their ideal of fatherhood and of its duties. A father may deem it expedient to punish his child ; this he should do not because he hates his child, but because he loves him. He may cut off his son " with a shilling," but this must be done in the spirit of kindness and with a desire to heal his son's spiritual infirmity. The father must never cease to love the errant son and must be ever ready to forgive. A son or daughter never ceases to be a son or daughter ; no law can break that relationship. A marriage may be dissolved by the law of the land, but no law can ever be promulgated which says that a child of two parents can cease to be the child of either. A father of a family is the representative of God in the family.

THE SICK OF THE PALSY (Mark ii. 1-12, and parallels).

The story of the cure, as it stands, suggests that Jesus early in His ministry forgave a paralytic and also cured him of his affliction. The men who brought him to Jesus no less than the paralytic were actuated by faith in His power to cure the bed-ridden man, as were the large majority of sufferers who craved the boon of a cure. The paralytic however gained more than a cure ; he was granted a greater boon, namely, that of forgiveness. But the Marcan story on grounds such as that it was against Christ's principles, clearly declared in the narratives of the Temptation in the wilderness, to work any sign for His own ends, has been held to be a composite narrative. It may be that Mark combined two narratives of the cure, one being a miracle only, and the other a saying of Jesus which was traditionally affixed to the cure, or that

Mark introduced an independent saying into the miracle of healing in order to group together the causes of contention between Jesus and the Pharisees, placing them quite early in the ministry. In his composite narrative, he may have inserted verse 9 to make one story. Omitting verse 9, we get an incomplete version of the dispute which took place on some unspecified occasion.

“ . . . Son, thy sins are forgiven. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak ? he blasphemeth : who can forgive sins but one, even God ? And straightway Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, saith unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts ? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. . . . ”

These verses tell of a controversy between Jesus and His Jewish opponents. In this dispute, Jesus claimed the power to forgive sins ; this was held to be blasphemy, for the Jews believed that only “ one, even God,” could forgive sins. Jesus reiterated His claim. The controversy then ended with these words : “ But that ye may know that I have power on earth to forgive sins ” ; the rest of the dispute is unknown, if the complete story is composite. But the story as given in Mark is robbed of its aim by this separation, and we must take it in its entirety as Matthew and Luke did.

We learn that forgiveness is the prerogative of God and can be bestowed by Him alone. No forgiveness which does not come from Him is of any value. The gift of forgiveness is supernatural. Jesus accepted the view that God alone forgave, and Jesus claimed this power. It was the claim of Christ that was being questioned.

The prophets had proclaimed that God forgave sins, and so would the services in the synagogue. Any one could make this proclamation. But Jesus was willing to substantiate His claim and prove that He had the power to forgive. The miracle was visible proof of a power which was beyond sense, and by His healing of the paralytic Jesus more than declared forgiveness. He conferred it as authoritatively as He conferred the gift of a cure. He proved He was the physician of the individual soul. He forgave not only in this instance, but also the sinful woman in Simon's house. The power, however, was rarely used. At the pool of Bethesda He said to the man who had been infirm for thirty-eight years, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee" (John v. 14, cf. viii. 11), and on the Cross He prayed for forgiveness for those who were wronging Him.

Again, the story as given in Mark tells us that the gift of forgiveness is more valuable than the gift of healing. This spiritual gift of God is to be sought even before the cure of our bodily ailments. Our need of forgiveness should be uppermost in our thoughts. When Jesus saw the man sick of the palsy, His first words were not "Arise and walk," but "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER (Luke vii. 36-50).

Jesus accepted an invitation to a meal in a Pharisee's house, and a woman of notorious character followed Him in. It was an act of courage on her part. After entering in, she anointed our Lord's feet and kissed them continually. Simon, the host, was seen by our Lord to be disdainful of the woman, and to him Jesus spake a parable about two debtors who owed different sums being freely forgiven. "Which of them therefore will love him (the

lender) most?" asked Jesus of the host. Simon answered, "He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most." Jesus then compared Simon's welcome with the woman's action, emphasising the greater signs of love shown by the woman, and concluded by saying to Simon, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little" (ver. 47). Jesus then turned to the woman and said, "Thy sins are forgiven" (ver. 48), and added later, for the benefit of those present who were critical of His power to forgive sins, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." By these last words Jesus both showed Himself the friend of the woman who was a sinner, and Himself guaranteed alike her presence in the house of the Pharisee and her restoration to society as a woman whose uncleanness had been removed.

There is ambiguity in *ὅτι* in verse 47. Did the woman's forgiveness depend on the fact that she loved Jesus much? This is contrary to the latter part of the same verse and to the forgiveness pronounced in verse 48. The explanation of the incident lies in the Parable of the Two Debtors. Greater love was shown by the man who had been forgiven the larger debt; but love in either case followed forgiveness. This is also the meaning of our Lord's words to Simon and the woman; to Simon, Jesus declared that the woman, because she had been forgiven more than Simon, had manifested signs of a bigger love: now He publicly forgave her as a proof of His regard for her. That this is the meaning of the saying to Simon is clear, because Jesus did not say, "He who loveth little before forgiveness wins little forgiveness afterwards," but "He to whom little is forgiven,"—that is to say, in whom there is only little to

be forgiven, "the same loveth little." The woman's faith in Jesus had saved her (ver. 50) and she had been forgiven privately. Our Lord's words to the woman bear out this interpretation. The Greek word translated "are forgiven" is *ἀφένονται*, which means literally "have been and are forgiven"; the woman had been forgiven before she had entered Simon's house, then she had shown great marks of her love in that house, and there, publicly, where her presence was resented, Jesus pronounced her forgiveness to let the world know that He, acknowledged to be a prophet, stood by her as now a clean woman.

We learn from this incident that forgiveness means restoration to friendship. Jesus, who had forgiven the sinful woman, was proving He was her friend. Forgiveness has cleansing and purifying power. We learn also that in a real forgiveness there should be no harping on the past, no remembrance of what had gone before. It is one of the essential marks of forgiveness; neither the prodigal son nor the woman who was a sinner had their past lives recalled. God's forgiveness is given not for any merit of ours, but of His gracious love. It recreates and restores character, unseals gratitude, and results in humility. This incident is both an apt illustration of the saying of Jesus that harlots with publicans were entering the kingdom of God before those who thought themselves righteous and stood apart from sinners, and is an illustration of His own attitude as the friend of publicans and sinners.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN (Luke xviii. 9-14).

Luke tells us that Jesus spoke this parable to certain "which trusted in themselves that they were righteous,

and set all others at nought." The Pharisee at prayer in the Temple was vain-glorious, priding himself on his moral excellence and happy in his self-satisfaction. He was honest in his belief that he had done no wrong ; he had kept the prescribed fasts and paid tithe on his income ; he was sure he had nothing which needed the forgiveness of God or man or woman. The publican was of a different mould ; feeling himself unworthy to be near the Pharisee, he stood apart from him ; feeling a conscious need of forgiveness, his simple prayer was for mercy—" God, be merciful to me, the sinner." The Pharisee was the counterpart of the elder brother in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the publican of the prodigal himself. Our Lord's verdict on the two men, judged by their respective prayers, was that the publican " went down to his house justified rather than the other " (pages 111-117). He did not say that the Pharisee was not justified in some degree, and we know that on another occasion He gazed with sympathy on a young man who thought as this Pharisee did.

In this parable we learn again that divine forgiveness is given to men, not for any merits of their own, but given freely by God to men who throw themselves on His mercy, sinful though they are. The Pharisee seemed to think that he had accumulated merit, that he could present to God a record of his acts of righteousness. The publican came to God with no thought of his acts of kindness or charity, but with a sense of his sin and unworthiness. The Pharisee is the type of moral man who through self-sufficiency loses his sense of the need of forgiveness, whilst the publican is like one who, being able to realise that he has broken the moral law, may enter the kingdom of God before the self-satisfied man.

Forgiveness is restoration to fellowship and friendship and love. And neither fellowship nor friendship nor love can be bought or bartered.

THE CALL OF SIMON (Luke v. 1-11).

Luke's independent version of the call of the first disciples has special reference to Simon. Jesus had spoken to the thronging mass from Simon's boat, and at the conclusion of His teaching He called on Simon to go out into deep water and let down his nets. Simon, though he had had a fruitless night, obeyed, and was rewarded with a great catch. His boat and a second boat belonging to his partners were filled so full of fish that both began to sink. Simon Peter when he saw it, "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For, says Luke, he was amazed at the wonderful draught of fishes. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

The version in Mark is simpler. There is no miracle. Jesus sees Simon and his brother netting fish in the sea, and calls to them, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mark i. 16-18).

It is clear that Luke obtained his fuller version from a tradition current in another centre of Christianity than Rome, but there is a circumstance which might well be considered. Luke has no record of the Resurrection appearance to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee, described in John xxi. 1-23, where Simon is one of a band of fishermen, takes part in a miraculous draught, and is restored to his apostolate and bidden "Follow me." Might it not be possible that tradition in the Lucan centre of information had mixed up the Marcan story of the call with the new call which came to Simon after the

Resurrection? This would give point to Simon's remark, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Simon had deserted Jesus by his denial of Him, and the one thing he would have desired was forgiveness for his treacherous conduct. Jesus appeared to Simon, and was greeted with a request to leave him for he was unworthy of his Master, but Jesus forgave him and promised to make him a fisher of men. Luke in his Easter stories merely mentions the appearance to Simon, but gives no indication of what took place at that appearance. We may surmise that it had to do with Simon's forgiveness, followed later at the Sea of Galilee by a restoration to discipleship and the leadership of the band of apostles; probably some details of these interviews were in the course of tradition transferred to the first call.

Be this as it may, the Lucan story records the impression made on a sinner by Jesus. No word of pardon is spoken, no word of repentance is uttered. Simon, like the publican in the Temple, feels he is a sinner and unworthy—which is the true attitude of a penitent seeking forgiveness either from God or man. The utterance of unworthiness and sinfulness involves a plea for forgiveness just as a call to service by the one offended, be he God or fellow-man, is a token of trust in the penitent. We recall Isaiah's vision in the Temple where the confession of unworthiness was followed by forgiveness and a call to service. To know oneself as unworthy is to react to the holiness of God.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Luke xvi. 19-31).

This parable was spoken to the Pharisees and, as in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, there is a reference to repentance. The rich man in Hades appeals to father

Abraham for his five brethren still on earth, that he would send Lazarus to them ; “ if one go to them from the dead, they will repent.”

There are elements in the story based on apocalyptic ideas, such as the spring of water and the three divisions of the intermediate state. But this factor does not prevent us from perceiving the importance attached to repentance in Jewish thought. The rich man has not forgotten that his five brethren need forgiveness. We are left with the impression that in life after death there is spiritual growth and enlightenment.

There is room for speculation in this parable taken in conjunction with the forgiveness bestowed on the disciples by the risen Lord. He gave the disciples who had forsaken Him and fled the blessing of peace, forgave and restored to the apostolate Simon Peter who had denied Him, appeared to James, his brother, who had not believed in Him, patiently bore with Thomas who desired proofs of His identity. May we infer that, as Jesus was the first-fruits of the dead, a similar spirit of forgiveness rules in the unseen world ? May we hope that if the future life is one of growth in knowledge of God that forgiving-ness is an essential part of that growth ? If, then, we on earth live in the spirit of forgiving-ness and repent, may we believe that those who have passed within the veil and from whom we have not received forgiveness for some injury inflicted on us in this life, show a forgiving spirit towards us ? It is not unreasonable to believe that, by the possession of a forgiving spirit and thereby of a nature akin to that of God, forgiveness can be had even when the offended one is separated from us in body but not separated from us in love.

THE TOWER IN SILOAM.

“ Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish ” (Luke xiii. 4, 5).

Once again Jesus is speaking to those outside the kingdom, urging them to repentance. An accident involving a well-known tower near the Holy City is utilised by our Lord to point a moral. All are sinners, all must repent and live worthily so that they may meet unexpected death readily and prepared.

Of the accident Jesus offered no explanation. To Him the religious implication was more important. Accidents are governed by natural laws without which life on this planet would be impossible. They are not due to an “ act of God ”—a phrase with which insurance companies protect themselves—except in the sense that He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible.

Jesus was more concerned with men living a life of the forgiven than with a discussion on secondary and primary causes. God calls us to a life of fellowship: “ All things work together for good to those who love Him.”

MARK IV. 10-12.

A saying reported by Mark, and from him copied by Matthew (xiii. 10-13) and Luke (viii. 9, 10), reads that Jesus spoke in parables with the definite purpose of preventing those hearers who were not disciples from turning and being forgiven. The record in Mark follows on the Parable of the Sower, and is inserted before the explanation of that parable:

Verse 10. " And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the Twelve asked of Him the parables. (11) And He said unto them, Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God : but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables : (12) that seeing they may see, and not perceive ; and hearing they may hear, and not understand ; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them."

The position of these verses, placed as they are between the Parable of the Sower and its explanation, together with the fact that verse 13 is the natural sequel of verse 9, points to their being a misplacement from some true context of which we are ignorant. These three verses of Mark are a general theory of parables and have no connexion with the Parable of the Sower. The last verse reflects the thought of Isa. vi. 9, 10. But what purpose underlies the saying? Did Jesus really say that God willed that some should not repent, and that He made them blind and deaf, just as He had hardened the Pharaoh's heart, and thereby forestalled their chance of forgiveness? This is so contrary to the character of God as portrayed in the parables of Jesus that we feel there must be some other explanation, and the remarks of Dr. Rawlinson on the subject may well be quoted. He points out that what were simple parables, intended to illustrate, were transformed into allegories, which needed a clue ; that some of the parables, such as the Sower and the Tares, were supplied with explanations by authority, and that these explanations were gradually accepted as being private explanations given by our Lord to the disciples. He then adds that this theory was further developed and applied to the parables in general. " They conveyed the mystery of the King-

dom of God which only the initiated were intended to understand. The general mass of the people was not intended to repent. . . . Actually the Jewish nation, taken as a whole, did fail to understand, and had rejected Christianity. The mind of the early Christian Church explained this as being due to a judicial hardening of their hearts which was itself part and parcel of the divine purpose." What we have therefore in these Marcan verses is probably a theory of the early Christian Church, which sought to explain why the mass of the Jews did not accept Christianity rather than an historically accurate statement of our Lord's purpose in teaching by means of parables. Dr. Rawlinson adds: "To say all this is not, of course, to deny that our Lord by His parables intended to stimulate and to challenge thought."

THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN.

"Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark iii. 28-30).

These verses have caused unnecessary anguish, if not alarm, in many minds. They seem to teach that there is one sin which is not defined, which will never be forgiven by God. But Jesus is not referring to a particular act of sin but to a state of sin, such as the possession of an unforgiving spirit, which to Him was unforgivable. The late Dr. Swete defined it thus, "To identify the source of good with the impersonification of evil implies a moral disease, for which the Incarnation itself provides no remedy."

Luke's version of the saying runs as follows: "And every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven" (xii. 10).

Mark does not speak of the Son of man. Thus it is evident that in Luke's source the logion of Jesus had a reference to Himself. Matthew combines the forms of Mark and Luke, and adds at the end the words, "neither in this world nor in that which is to come" (xii. 31, 32). If Luke's source is earlier, and this is probable on many grounds, Mark may have by omitting the offence against the Son of man, intended to teach that calumny against the Son of man was as blasphemous as calumny against the Holy Spirit.

The Greek text of Mark may mean that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is "in the power of eternal sin" or "is liable to an eternal punishment for sin." In either case, the blasphemy becomes eternal or æonian when it has become a fixed and ineradicable habit. Each single act tends to harden into a state. St. James has expressed it thus: "Sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death" (i. 15). A man, therefore, who has become so incurably hardened in evil that he delights in evil and calls evil good excludes himself from forgiveness. He renders himself incapable of accepting the forgiveness offered by God.

Jesus was speaking to Pharisees on an occasion when He had cast out demons. They accused Him of casting out devils by the spirit of Beelzebub, whilst He insisted that He did it by the Spirit or finger of God. The form of the blasphemy was their saying, "He hath an unclean spirit."

Christ's utterance shows that the personal insult to Him was forgivable. The calumny against Himself He did not resent. He, it would seem, did not hold them guilty for their aspersion of His character. What He resented and said was unforgivable was their identification of the Holy Spirit with the spirit of Satan. He realised that personal abuse and wrong-doing to Him might be due to ignorance, and for such ignorant behaviour and conduct He could pray, as He did on the Cross. But the persistent accusations of blasphemy indicated the persistence of a habit. The Pharisees accused John the Baptist of such blasphemy (Luke vii. 33), they accused Jesus more than once (Mark iii. 22 ; Luke xi. 15 ; John vii. 20, viii. 48, x. 20). Blasphemy was becoming a habit, as Stephen perceived (Acts vii. 51). It was this continuous, persistent, and blaspheming spirit which was unforgivable either now or in the future. Such a spirit was past praying for (1 John v. 16). It was a spirit which was incapable of receiving forgiveness.

The Jews, as we have noted, believed that the sin of uncircumcision was unpardonable. "There will no more be pardon or forgiveness unto them for all the sin of this eternal error" (Jubilees xv. 34). Jesus may have had this theory in mind and contradicted it, or He may have hinted at the view of the Law that deliberate and wilful sinning could not be forgiven in any circumstances. This we do not know. But it is reasonable to ask whether elsewhere in His sayings there is mention of an unforgivable sin ; if there is, and if it is a state and not an act, we get support for saying that Jesus when He spoke of blasphemy was referring to a state of deliberate evil and not a definite act.

In the corollary to the Lord's Prayer Jesus very definitely spoke of an unforgivable sin. It was the sin of non-forgiveness of trespasses. If a man will not forgive the trespasses of others, God will not forgive him. The one unpardonable sin is the spirit of non-forgiveness.

Is there any connexion between the corollary to the Lord's Prayer and the unforgivable sin in Mark's words with which we are dealing ?

Our Lord's statement that an offender must be forgiven seventy times seven clearly implies not only His peremptory insistence on forgiving-ness, the failure to do which was to end in unforgiveness by God, but that He believed that no sinner was so depraved that there was no possibility of good in him. The insistence pointed a warning. Because the worst of men have good in them, it is our duty to draw this goodness out. To act against our Lord's express teaching to keep on forgiving indefinitely is wilful sinning against the Holy Spirit, it is selfishness against which God's nature reacts.

Not to forgive may well be termed blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, for it is acting against the very nature of God. To be capable of God's forgiveness, we must be partakers of His nature. God is Love. If we do not by forgiving strive to be perfect as God who forgives through love, it is by our deliberate choice. We through our own selfish conduct choose to place a barrier between God and ourselves. We of set purpose give no welcome to the Holy Spirit who will convince us of sin, lead us into all truth, and fortify and strengthen us against selfish action on our part. We blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and are guilty of presumptuous sin when we grieve the Spirit of God. A man who does not forgive

"hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" and cannot be forgiven "either in this world or in that which is to come" (Matt. xii. 32).

The comparison of this saying of Jesus with the first word on the Cross is instructive. Those for whom Jesus prayed were the soldiers who were doing their duty and later showed pity by giving Him something to drink, the mob who were unconscious of the enormity of their offence, and others such as His judges who were not deliberate offenders with a perverted conscience. None of them could be guilty therefore of blasphemy, but all were forgivable.

It has been suggested that the unforgivable sin is probably one of slander. If Jesus was referring to slander, Mark is portraying a human Jesus who, when He began His statement, remarked to the scribes that ordinary calumnies will be forgiven except one, a slander which turned a holy act into a satanic act such as their saying that "He hath Beelzebub" or "He hath an unclean spirit." A slander against a man's spiritual character is one of the hardest things to forgive. Support may be obtained from Rabbinic literature. A Rabbi once said, "But if he has put forth a bad name against his fellow-men, he hath not forgiveness for ever." R. T. Herford, in his comment on this saying, wrote: "There is here no question of a sin which God will not pardon, but of an affront which man will not, or does not pardon. It is only a way of saying that slander is one of the hardest of all offences to forgive" (Walker, *Jesus and Jewish Teaching*, p. 344).

If Jesus therefore referred to slander He might have meant that slander is very hard to forgive, but, in the light of His teaching on forgiveness, it must be forgiven.

THE POWER TO " BIND " AND " LOOSE."

According to Matthew, Jesus gave the Church the power to bind and loose. In this new Israel, in any quarrel between brethren, its members must show a spirit of unlimited forgiveness and use every means of winning the offender back to the congregation from which he might have been excluded. The passage dealing with this subject is as follows, and is given in Matt. xviii. 15-22 ; the hypothetical case in the passage is that of a private wrong done by one brother to another.

" Ver. 15 And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone : if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. (16) But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. (17) And if he refuse to hear thee, tell it unto the Church : and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican. (18) Verily, I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (19) Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. (20) For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. (21) Then came Peter, and said unto him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him ? until seven times ? (22) Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times ; but, Until seventy times seven."

The case is that of a brother who has suffered from a

personal injury ; this offence was not at first known to the community (vers. 15 and 17). The offended one is bidden to denounce the offender privately, and thus try to win him back (ver. 15). If this fails, a certain procedure is to be followed. The offended one is to get one or more witnesses, who with himself would make the two or more witnesses required by Jewish Law (Deut. xix. 15). With these witnesses, he is to make another appeal to the wrong-doer ; the witnesses therefore are witnesses not of the offence but of the attempt at reconciliation and of the appeal to the offender to admit his sin (ver. 16). If this fails, the congregation is to be informed, and they are to try to convince the wrong-doer ; if this fails, the offender is to be treated as " the Gentile and the publican "—that is, he is to be excommunicated (ver. 17). The power to bind and loose is bestowed on the Church, as a body, by a pronouncement of Jesus (ver. 18). Even if the community is small and consists of only two or three, they are assured that God will ratify their decision, for He will hear their prayer (vers. 19, 20). But the offended brother, and now every brother of the Church is such, must give the wrong-doer every opportunity of repentance and amendment, even if he has to keep on forgiving him continually.

As we examine this passage as it stands we see that disciplinary pastoral power, exercised by the community acting in its corporate capacity, is the meaning to be attached, at least here, to the power to bind and loose. If the first private appeal to the offender succeeds, the wrong-doer is won back without the Church knowing anything about the matter ; the wrong-doer admits his fault ; he has already been forgiven by the offended party, since Jesus, it will be noticed, takes it for granted

that the offended brother has unreservedly forgiven the offender and only desires intensely to win him back. The matter automatically ends if the delinquent is won over at the first interview. The Church's power to bind will not be called upon. If the wrong-doer had a sense of grievance it was appeased at the private reconciliation.

The whole passage in Matthew may be a composite narrative, for the verses from 15-21 are parallel with that of Luke xvii. 3, 4. It is possible that the commission and the reference to corporate prayer were at one time independent of each other and of their present position.

Luke's two verses parallel with Matt. xviii. 15-21 are "Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke xvii. 3, 4). Thus, according to Luke, the wrong dealt with was a private wrong, as in Matthew; the aim of the injured person was to make the offender seek the other's forgiveness, whilst in Matthew the aim was to win the brother, who had done the wrong, and thus to restore him to fellowship after admission of wrong-doing. Luke supplies that which is suggested in Matthew.

The case shows the two conditions of forgiveness, namely, the forgiving spirit, and repentance which would lead to restoration. The same principles are thus in operation as in human forgiveness. No recourse was to be had to the Church until rebuke and personal appeal had failed. If the appeal of the community failed, penalty was inflicted—the offender had to be excommunicated. But even as Jesus was the friend of publicans and sinners, this penalty was to be exercised along with a spirit of forgiveness which would be actively directed to

win the offender back to the fellowship of the Church. Luke's saying holds therefore, "If he repent, forgive him."

THE POWER TO FORGIVE AND RETAIN SINS.

Jesus after His Resurrection, says St. John or an unknown writer, gave to the Apostles a special commission. The author may have been aware of the commission to bind and loose which was given before the Resurrection, and may have inserted it in a new form in its present position, or he may have had knowledge of a second commission which had to do not with discipline but with forgiveness of sins. How this new commission was interpreted by the Apostles will be seen in the Acts and Epistles. The new authority was to be exercised by the Church as a body; it was not bestowed on each individual present on the occasion, but on all of them acting corporately. No apostle, for example, ever claimed the power to forgive sins as Jesus did.

The verse in St. John is the only place in his Gospel which treats of forgiveness. "Whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John xx. 23).

Luke has a passage which partly explains the interpretation of the logion in John. He tells us that just before His Ascension, Jesus said to the Apostles, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations" (xxiv. 46, 47). The disciples were to preach the message of forgiveness.

The interpretation of this new commission is liable

to be influenced by theological bias. One branch at least of the Catholic Church explains it as giving a priest the power to pronounce forgiveness as Jesus forgave the sick of the palsy and the sinful woman.

Our intention is to trace presently how the Apostles acted after this commission was granted, and we shall see that it was understood to mean the authority to proclaim that the divine forgiveness was unlimited and extended to all sins, and to administer baptism for the remission of sins. They preached the gospel of love and forgiveness, baptizing Gentiles as well as Jews.

In our survey of the Apostolic age and of the centuries that followed, the commission to bind and loose will be understood to mean the authority to exercise discipline in the Church on the principles laid down in the hypothetical case given in Matthew. It appears to us that it is in this sense that the Apostles, especially St. Paul, carried out their ministry of reconciliation. In the age that followed, the commission to bind and loose was sometimes identified with the commission to forgive and retain sins. But we question whether any interpretation is justified which assumed, for example, that to bind on earth by excommunication and to bind in heaven are identical with retaining sins on earth and retaining sins in heaven. This would mean that the sins which the Church would not forgive would not be forgiven by God. Dr. Kirk calls this "a refinement of cruelty" (*Vision of God*, p. 224). If excommunication from the Church was final and penal, and meant the exclusion of a sinner from all hope of God's forgiveness, the binding of the Church would be the retaining of sins on earth and in heaven. As it happened, some of the Fathers of the Church in the early centuries did take such a view,

and, further, the Church was more interested in excommunication than in reconciliation, in binding than in loosing. In this identification the special commission to Peter was often referred to, as by Tertullian (page 242).

The Petrine commission was bestowed on him and not on a community. It included binding and loosing and a special gift, that of the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xvi. 17-19). When we turn to the Acts or the Epistles, we do not find that Peter exercised an exclusive power of discipline over the whole Church. We do not read that he by any inherent right forgave or retained sins. In one particular he played the leading part and decided that Cornelius, a god-fearer, should be admitted to the Church ; he also shared in the decision to admit Gentiles. It would seem that the gift of the keys referred to the decision to admit or refuse to admit Gentiles to the Church by baptism.

BAPTISM AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

Our Lord's final commission included that of baptism, and baptism in the Apostolic Church was associated with remission of sins. Quite clearly something more is meant than mere membership of the Church or an act by which we are baptized into the Christian religion. It is a baptism into Christ or into His death (Rom. vi. 3) ; it is also said to be in His name (Acts ii. 38, x. 48 ; 1 Cor. vi. 11). The name of a person stands for a person ; this is generally admitted. But varying views are held concerning the phrases "in" or "into the name." Does it mean merely, "by the authority of" or something more significant, namely, incorporation into the name ? The first meaning can be drawn from passages in the New Testament where there is some confusion

between the use of the prepositions *ἐν* and *εἰς*, but the relevant passage is that of St. Paul. "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Rom. vi. 3). Baptism is union with Christ, a participation of His very self, an identification with Christ. In the passage, baptism is said to be "into his death." By this he means that this incorporation with Christ (when united with the symbolism of immersion in water and then a rising out of it) implies that the baptized shall live out the symbolism both spiritually and morally. Baptism therefore brings the Christian into union with Christ and by means of this union he lives a new life. The Christian at his baptism has died unto sin once for all. He is free from all claims that sin might make, or, as St. Paul put it, "he that hath died is justified from sin" (Rom. vi. 7). Henceforth he should live a new life, a life of unbroken communion with God, a regenerated life.

This union with Christ in baptism conveys forgiveness of sins. This is implied in the symbolism of washing. The baptism of John the Baptist was incomplete, for it was not a being "born of spirit" (John iii. 5), but Jesus by His death redeemed us, "in whom we have our redemption through His blood, even the remission of our sins" (Eph. i. 7). Thus repentance and conviction did not of themselves remove the stain and guilt of sin, but baptism did. Saul, though he had been converted, was taught "Be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling upon His name" (Acts xxii. 16).

The sins forgiven in baptism are "original and actual." Ideally, by union with Christ, a union which is permanent and everlasting, a Christian after baptism should be dead unto sin. But he does not cease to sin.

Baptism does not guarantee a sinless life. Sins after baptism affect the union with Christ which was the great gift of baptism. Hence the provision of means by which sins after baptism may be forgiven and Christians saved from breaking away from Christ. The forgiveness of post-baptismal sin may be called an extension of the forgiveness granted in baptism. The Christian need never be out of the reach of God's forgiveness.

The greatest gift of baptism, union with Christ, has its bearing on the condition for divine forgiveness on which our Lord insisted. The new regenerated life has to be manifested. We are to be "instruments of righteousness unto God." The possession of a forgiving spirit maintains the union with Christ, and manifests His very spirit of love and forgiveness. For what Christ is by nature we are made by grace; we at baptism become partakers of all He is, and this includes the forgiving spirit

CHAPTER IX

FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND THE CROSS

JESUS, during His life, taught how forgiveness from God could be obtained and an atonement effected between God and man. He laid down a peremptory and new condition for atonement between God and the individual, namely, human forgiveness. In His teaching on forgiveness, He revealed something of the character of God, His desire to have the erring sinner home without any reference to the past, His love which goes out to seek a lost sheep, His willingness to forgive the heavy debt owed Him, His longing to see His children in charity with one another. Again, by forgiving sins during His ministry, and by teaching the Lord's Prayer with its petition for divine forgiveness, He undoubtedly laid it down that divine forgiveness of sins was granted, and was obtainable, and was realised before His death and therefore apart from His death.

What, then, is meant by the phrase, "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. xv. 3)? Was His death on the Cross necessary? How did His death win salvation? Such questions raise the whole problem of the Atonement, and the answers given are known as theories of the Atonement. Those theories deal in the main with the mode or manner in which forgiveness of sin as a cosmic evil was made possible rather than with the forgiveness of the sins of individuals. We are not called upon, in our study of the forgiveness of sins, to discuss or assess the various theories of the grounds on which God forgave the sin of

mankind, the evil affecting the whole race of man ; whether, for example, Christ's death on the Cross was a necessity begotten of God's own nature, or whether His death was such an exhibition of divine love that men by dwelling on its wondrous nature must fashion their lives accordingly and respond to love with love. Such speculation is a matter of theology, and witnesses to the desire of men to use their reason to penetrate the mystery. But inasmuch as the Atonement shows that God " is just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus " it does bear on our subject. As God showed His hatred of sin, so must we, in forgiving others, show a like hatred of sin in forgiving, and translate the fact of the Cross into a reality. Forgiveness must imply an ethical relation which upholds the righteousness of God as well as the love of God.

For the death on the Cross was more than a fact in history, more than an occurrence which took place on a certain day at a certain time " under Pontius Pilate." It was the culminating act of a life of obedience even unto death, and it has a message of forgiveness for us. On the Cross, Jesus in two sayings forgave His persecutors and a dying thief respectively ; on the Cross, He uttered a cry which raised the question whether God was a loving God. Our immediate duty is the examination of these three utterances, together with one other saying referring to His death, for they are intimately connected with the individual's need of forgiveness and with his conception of God.

The Incarnation did not cease with the Cross. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself from the Incarnation, on the Cross, through the Resurrection, and He is doing so now in the Church. Our daily sins of

thought and word and deed need forgiveness ; they are very present and active in us, and forgiveness of these sins is a much desired need in our life. The Cross of Christ has to be vitally experienced if the Atonement made by His life no less than by His death can be understood even in part. There on the Cross died One who was more than a Jew of the first century ; He who died was not only man, but God as man. We may without exaggeration say that Jesus lived and died to show the world its need of being forgiven and of forgiving. To understand the Atonement men must live a life of constant forgiving-ness, for the Atonement on the Cross is the final assurance of divine forgiveness.

THE LAST SUPPER.

The doctrine of the Atonement is raised by our Lord's words when, taking the cup, He gave thanks and gave it to those present in the upper room, saying, " Drink ye all of it ; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins." The importance for our study, however, is the fact that both with the bread and the wine He said, " This do in remembrance of Me," and that St. Paul, who records this phrase, started his account of the institution with the words, " In the night in which He was betrayed " (1 Cor. xi. 23-25). Jesus on the very day of His betrayal instituted a rite which was to bring spiritual blessing to those who betrayed Him. There was no thought in His mind of any retaliation for injury of the very basest kind ; those who were partaking of the supper with Him were soon to forsake Him and take flight, and one was about to deny Him. Here we see something of the nature of true forgiveness. Thus does God forgive,

and thus should man forgive his fellow-man. Treachery, unkindness, hatred should be met with fidelity, kindness, and love. St. Paul, who wonderfully linked the thought of the betrayal with the rite of redeeming love, was the apostle who wrote : " If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him to drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good " (Rom. xii. 20, 21). Antagonism will not soften the heart of an offender, but patient kindness will win him back ; coals of fire will soften the hard iron of an enemy's heart.

In this utterance in the upper room, we may learn that Jesus willingly shed His blood to assure us of the truth of God's forgiveness. Once He proved it by healing a paralytic ; now He would give the final and conclusive proof of it by shedding His blood for the sin of the world and by inviting His own to share in that experience. So man must forgive whatever the cost. The tragedy of scorned love is the absence of a forgiving spirit.

THE FIRST WORD FROM THE CROSS.

During His ministry, Jesus said, " Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy : but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you ; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven " (Matt. v. 43-45). On the Cross, Jesus practised what He taught. Forgiveness was His first thought at the very time when He was being crucified. He prayed for this gift for His persecutors ; it is our bounden duty to follow His example. The prayer He uttered on the Cross was not for the soldiers alone ; they were only doing their duty. It was for all those who had wronged Him. They were

not acting deliberately against conscience, and therefore were not guilty of the unpardonable sin of blasphemy. They were forgivable: St. Luke wrote shortly after this prayer, "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts vi. 7). To pray for forgiveness for those who trespass against us, whatever the trespass be, is a Christian duty.

Stephen, the first martyr for Christianity, cried with a loud voice as he was being stoned. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60).

Prayer for those who offend us, whether they seek or refuse our friendship, maintains the forgiving spirit. The forgiving spirit is both active and passive. In the active sphere, the spirit is strengthened to heap coals of fire on the wrong-doer's head; in the passive sphere, it helps us to refrain from acts which aggravate or stir up antagonism.

Here we may call attention to the many forms of prayer in which God is asked to bless "our parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends"—an incomplete list indeed, for it does not add, "and all those who have wronged us, especially....." This addition would check all thought of resentment and personal vengeance at the very outset, and the condition laid down by Jesus in His Prayer would become an active principle in human life.

THE SECOND WORD FROM THE CROSS.

One of the two malefactors who were crucified with Jesus was probably a Jew, for he knew something about His Kingdom. He and the second malefactor were at variance over Jesus, Who was crucified between them, but, won over by His patient endurance, he said to Him,

“ Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.” It was not a prayer for forgiveness, but the malefactor had in argument shown a sense of righteousness and a sympathetic admiration for Him who had done nothing amiss. He had no self-pity, but admitted that he suffered justly and that he received the due reward of his deeds. When Jesus heard the request made to Him, He met him more than half-way. He promised that the malefactor would share with Him the joys of Paradise. May we not learn from this incident something of the meaning of active forgiveness? The offended party must be willing to meet the offender at all times; the spirit of forgiving-ness must be like potential energy, ready to become kinetic and active at any moment. Sympathy with the wrong-doer, as it were taking his place and entering into his point of view, is of the essence of the experience of forgiveness.

This utterance on the Cross as well as the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican contain a warning. It is not enough for a sinner who has led an evil life to express sorrow at the end, and expect forgiveness. This would be contrary to the principles of Christian ethics, if not of all ethics.

THE FOURTH WORD FROM THE CROSS.

“ My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” Innumerable explanations have been given of this cry of dereliction. Here are a few. It is the cry of despair over a lost cause. The words were not uttered but were ascribed to Him from the first verse of Psalm xxii. His mind during these hours on the Cross kept dwelling on passages of Scripture, and this verse from a Messianic Psalm, passages of which fitted many events of the

Crucifixion, was merely an utterance from a familiar Psalm without any deeper significance. The words were an expression of what He felt and not of what He believed. The words show that Jesus was vicariously offering the wrath of God in the place of sinners. The anguish and pain clouded His soul and caused a temporary loss of His faith. The sense of His Father's presence was withdrawn from Him that He might fully share the awful experience of men who on their death-bed feel abandoned. Or, finally, it was a cry of victory, for Psalm xxii. ends on a note of triumph.

The first question we must ask is, "Does God ever forsake any one?" This forsaking would be so contradictory to our Lord's revelation of the infinite love of God for all men that we can only assume that any explanation which suggests even a temporary withdrawal of God is *ipso facto* wrong. God never forsakes; it is the teaching of the triad of parables in Luke xv., and of many of the sayings of Jesus; man forsakes God, but God never forsakes man. We cannot for one moment therefore allow that God would have forsaken His beloved Son. Old Testament teaching might suggest an unfeeling, an angry, and a forsaking God, but the teaching of Jesus is far otherwise.

We cannot reasonably get over the difficulty by saying that the cry was introduced into the text and was never uttered. It might have been omitted in a record because of its difficulties, but it would not have been inserted unless there was good reason for believing that it had been uttered, heard, and misunderstood by the bystanders.

The true explanation, I believe, is that this was a cry not of despair but of victory. Certain terms from

present-day psychology will perhaps make this clear. It is well known that one of the processes by which the conscious mind endeavours to banish a painful experience is *repression*. When conflict takes place in the mind, every endeavour is made to banish one or other of the opposing complexes which cause it, in order that the normal activities of life may be continued. We know from our ordinary experience that a trouble or sorrow which forms a painful complex will, unless it is repressed, prevent the full exercise of our bodily and mental powers. This painful complex is very often side-tracked by being thus repressed, *i.e.* pushed down into the unconscious; it is not lost or destroyed, and it may under suitable conditions find expression again in conscious life. The greater the emotion involved in this complex, the greater its energy, and, when released, the greater the effect. This is clearly seen, for example, in a violent outburst of rage after the repression of angry feelings.

Was there in our Lord's life any such painful conflict associated with the Crucifixion? Yes, in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark xiv. 32-42; Matt. xxvi. 36-46; Luke xxii. 39-46). The Evangelists tell us that there Jesus was appalled and agitated as if with terror and awe, that He told the chosen three disciples that His soul was overcome with a sorrow that could kill, and that as He prayed He was in an agony of fear and prayed with such greater earnestness and intensity that His sweat fell to the ground like drops of blood. The description gives us an insight into the terrible nature of the mental conflict and the almost overwhelming power of the emotion which it caused in Jesus, an emotion so strong that He was drawn away from the disciples.

Further, we are told something of this conflict ; Jesus was warning the three to pray that they entered not into temptation. He Himself was being assailed by a temptation to escape from the cup of bitterness which awaited Him, to follow His own will and not the will of His Father. The fear, the agitation, the awe, and the temptation to shirk, created a complex of doubt, a complex antagonistic to the one supreme complex which had been the governing thought of His life since the Temptation in the Wilderness—God as Father and as Love. All His inherited instincts had been sublimated to the one great purpose of His life to set forth God as the God of Love, and any complex antagonistic would be one which was in its elements associated with thoughts of God as not being a God of Love. All knowledge of the Scriptures which suggested such thoughts would be united with this complex of doubt.

We are told that the conflict in the Garden ended in a victory. He accepted God's will. The complex with painful and strong effect was repressed by prayer and forced down into the unconscious, but it was not lost or destroyed. The victory gained is symbolically represented by Luke as the appearance of an angel from heaven, strengthening Jesus in His fight with the powers of darkness.

We come now to the cry of dereliction. Mark's account, short though it is, is as follows, Matthew being almost identical. " And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani ? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? . . . And Jesus uttered a loud voice, and gave up

the ghost." Luke adds that "when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost." John gives us further information; Jesus asked for something to drink, saying I thirst, and when He had received the vinegar given Him, He said, It is finished, and then died.

For at least three hours Jesus uttered no word; we may rightly infer that He was unconscious. After this long silence came the cry of dereliction, followed by a gleam of consciousness when He asked for something to drink. Preceding this short period of full consciousness there would have been a stage of semi-consciousness. It was during this semi-conscious period that the cry was uttered. Resistance being for a while removed, the complex of doubt escaped from the unconscious and found expression. Its strength is shown by the force with which it was uttered. "Jesus cried with a loud voice"; but the cry was not what He believed. It was what He disbelieved. It was not an indication of despair, but an indication of the victory He had gained in the Garden of Gethsemane, in a conflict so intense that the sweat was like drops of blood falling from Him.

There are many similar cases, which can be similarly explained. For example, the speech of a pure-minded woman under an anæsthetic might in some instances give the ignorant reason for thinking that her true character was at last being disclosed. Actually, of course, these instances prove the reverse. The thoughts that find expression during her unconsciousness or semi-consciousness are those with which she has battled successfully, and which she has driven into her unconscious mind. Their escape now proves only her triumph over temptation.

GOD'S LOVE AND THE CROSS.

The Cross is the disclosure of the wounds our want of love has inflicted on God. Calvary shows us that God's love is sacrificial love, and that He spares Himself nothing.

The Cross resolves for us a problem of God's righteousness. Is not free forgiveness immoral? If forgiveness is free, is not God's righteousness endangered? Would it not lead men to think lightly of it, as men would if human forgiveness was granted freely? The answer is that, over and above the condition of forgiveness, the sacrifice on the Cross shows us what God bore that the world might learn what sin meant to Him. God as man bore the pain and agony and anguish as the cost of our alienation from Him. If it were not for love supremely manifested in the Cross, the doctrine of the free forgiveness of sins would be immoral. It is the same in human relationships; the grief and pain caused by human wrongs, and our experience in forgiving, enable us to enter, however partially, into the cost to God of the salvation wrought for us through the Cross. God does not forgive through indifference (cf. Rom. iii. 25, 26).

The Cross has the power to make men seek forgiveness. For the revelation of God's love shown by Jesus in His life and by His death on the Cross is an incentive to men to forgive others and to repent. Love and the Cross have the power to change men; other men by taking knowledge that the converted have been with Jesus (Acts iv. 18) might be influenced to follow their example. If, then, we learn that not to forgive others is fatal, and also dwell on the love of God who sent His Son to die for all, we shall desire to forgive others in order that by thus entering into the heart of the Atonement we may win forgiveness from God.

CHAPTER X

THE APOSTOLIC AGE

THE Acts of the Apostles cannot be understood apart from the Gospels ; it presupposes them. The teaching of our Lord was of first importance in the age of the Apostles, and His Passion and Resurrection and Ascension were primary elements of all teaching and preaching. Appeal to our Lord's views was the basis of action. We may illustrate this by two instances of many which exist. First, the reverence with which Christ's own words were referred to by St. Paul, to whom they were final and authoritative. " For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord," he wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. iv. 15) ; " Even so did the Lord ordain," and " For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," he wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. ix. 14, xi. 23). The Apostle was careful to distinguish between the views of Christ and himself : " But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord." . . . " But to the rest say I, not the Lord " (1 Cor. vii. 10-12). Again, in his address to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, he supported his plea for the poor by recalling Christ's own words, found nowhere in the Gospels, " Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive " (Acts xx. 35). The philosophers of Athens criticised St. Paul " because He preached Jesus and the resurrection " (Acts xvii. 18). Secondly, we may turn to the Church

at Antioch. Modern critical study of the Gospels has, from the texts of Matthew and Luke, separated a document which was probably written to meet the special problems of the strong Gentile Church of that city. What questions does that document answer, in every case with reference to Christ and by reliance on the teaching of Christ? Here are some of them. Was Antioch justified in forming a Church of its own? How was the Church to meet Jewish opposition? Was Christian baptism necessary? Did Jesus enjoin missionary effort? Was the Church to forgive St. Peter for his vacillation when he visited the city? In every one of the answers to these questions, the sole authority was that of Christ. He, and He alone, was their Mentor and their Guide.

If, then, the teaching of Jesus was held to be the sole repository of truth in the days of the Apostles, we clearly must assume that our Lord's teaching on the Fatherhood and Love of God as well as on forgiveness were taught and accepted as eternal principles. Also, as the Acts and the Epistles of the Apostles presuppose a knowledge of the Gospel, and cannot be expected to repeat everything that our Lord taught and said, we can only expect to find in them indications that the views of Christ on the conception of God and on forgiveness were either taught or lived out in the Christian Churches. Let us see whether this was so.

Was the conception of God as Father and Love the central conception of the Apostolic Age? The answer is certain. We read very little of God as the Creator, as transcendent, as almighty, but we read over and over again of God as Father and as Love, of God as merciful. The knowledge of God as Father is identical with that

of the Gospels ; God is the Father of Jesus in a unique sense (Rom. viii. 3, xv. 6 ; 2 Cor. i. 3 ; 1 Pet. i. 3) ; God is the Father of believers in a special sense (Rom. viii. 15-27 ; Eph. i. 5 ; 1 Tim. iv. 10) ; God is the Father of all men (Eph. iii. 14, iv. 6 ; 1 Cor. viii. 6) ; God is Love (1 John ii. 5, iii. 1 ; Rom. v. 5-8, viii. 31-39) ; God is merciful (Rom. xi. 30 f.).

Then as to forgiveness. We may certainly assume that the Lord's Prayer was taught and explained. The evidence is in the Gospels. But we are not left without indications of the exercise of forgiveness in the Acts and Epistles, and we shall deal with them presently. For example, charity is taught as a Christian duty ; St. Paul urges the Corinthian Church to forgive and to restore a grave sinner to fellowship, and St. John writes that God will forgive all sins.

The teaching of the Apostles and of the Acts is thus in harmony with that of our Lord.

How was the commission to forgive (John xx.) interpreted by the Apostles ? To the Church was given the Holy Spirit in order that it might exercise the power bestowed by the Risen Lord. They exercised it not by a judicial act in which was used such a phrase as "I absolve thee" or the Lord's own words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." No words of absolution were pronounced by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, but only a call to baptism unto the remission of sins. "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins ; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 38). Salvation, Peter again said later, can only be obtained in and through the Risen Christ. "In none other is there salvation : for neither is there any other name

under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). No community of Apostles forgave sins as Jesus did. What the Apostles, and St. Peter specially as leader, did with this commission was to proclaim that forgiveness was available to all, to decide which persons were to be given or refused the baptism which brought forgiveness, and to decide whether a God-fearing Gentile and all Gentiles should be admitted into the Church which at first was wholly Jewish.

In the early Church baptism was the great means of the remission of sins (page 177). It was to be ministered in the name of Jesus Christ, and by it forgiveness was available even for those who crucified the Messiah or persecuted His followers (Acts xxii. 16).

There was a second sacrament which, according to Matthew, brought forgiveness of sins. It is that of our Lord's Body and Blood. "This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins" (xxvi. 28). But we do not read that in the Apostolic age forgiveness was definitely associated with the "breaking of the bread."

The evidence of the Acts is that the commission bestowed by our Lord to forgive and retain sins, was not, by those to whom it was given, taken to imply the authority to give absolution as Jesus did.

Of the two sacraments, we read most about baptism which brought remission of pre-baptismal sin. The other sacrament known also as "the breaking of the bread," was one of the means of forgiveness for post-baptismal sin.

First, then, as to pre-baptismal sin. On the Day of Pentecost St. Peter preaches to the multitude gathered

in Jerusalem, " Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins ; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost " (Acts ii. 38). Not only Jews, but God-fearers too, may receive the gifts, says St. Peter to Cornelius : " To Him (Jesus) bear all the prophets witness, that through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins " (Acts x. 43). St. Paul in his address at Antioch in Pisidia holds the same view. His acute mind had realised the significance of the Atonement. He therefore merges the thought of forgiveness in the larger idea of justification (which includes the declaration of having been forgiven) and presents this wider concept to his hearers. " Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this Man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins : and by Him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses " (Acts xiii. 38, 39). But St. Paul is not always a theologian. He is also an evangelist and a missionary, ever mindful of the change which came over him at his own conversion. He remembers that at his baptism, which followed his conversion, his sins were washed away (Acts ix. 18, xxii. 16). Therefore, when he stands before Agrippa, he declares that he received his own commission to baptize from Jesus in person, and that repentance, the turning from darkness to light, must precede baptism. He quotes our Lord's own words to him. " I send Thee unto them (the Gentiles), to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins (Acts xxvi. 17, 18).

That baptism gave forgiveness of all past sins has

ever since Apostolic days been the doctrine of the Church (2 Peter i. 9). But what happens when sin is committed after baptism? There was the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ which was available for remission of sins; there was mutual confession to one another; there was also repentance. Christians were assured of the forgiveness of sins because they had "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 1, 2).

Confession to God is recommended by St. John: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). St. James advises confession before the elders of the Church in case of sickness, so that by prayer the invalid may receive forgiveness. In ordinary cases, he advises mutual confession so that by intercession their souls may be healed. "The prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed" (Jas. v. 15, 16). Confession, however, is to be public. Private confession did not come into use till the fifth century.

In the case of Simon Magus, repentance and prayer were held to be the means of forgiveness. Christians in Samaria had been baptized, but had given no signs of the possession of an ecstatic spirit. However, these signs followed the laying on of hands by Peter and John. Simon then desired to buy the gift and was sternly rebuked by Peter. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts viii. 14-24).

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH.

In St. Paul's letters are to be seen the early stages of what later became a system of penitential discipline. In his ministry of reconciliation he both excommunicated and reconciled, that is, bound and loosed. As two of the instances are given in some detail, they are worthy of study in view of the future history of the Church.

We are now dealing with the life of a community such as we have already had an illustration of in Matt. xviii. (page 172). We find that in the settlement of a quarrel, rebuke and reproof and excommunication and repentance and reconciliation are all referred to, as in the sections in Matthew and Luke. St. Paul calls his ministry a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. v. 18) ; discipline in it varies with the offence. Let us consider the two best known instances. The first is that of an offender in the Church at Corinth who had caused grief both to the Apostle and the Church. St. Paul bore no personal resentment for the wrong done to himself. He also called upon the Church to forgive the wrong-doer, on whom punishment had been inflicted by the majority, lest he should feel his exclusion from fellowship too severely. He urged them, as a sign of forgiveness, to cancel the excommunication, and to restore the offender to their fellowship. He was willing to forgive the man for the insult to himself "if he had anything to forgive." He hesitated to speak of himself as "forgiving," but he did it for the sake of the Church in the presence of Christ, that is to say, with His approval. He made this appeal to the Church lest, if no forgiveness were granted, the offender should be seized upon by Satan and tempted to become an apostate (2 Cor. ii. 5-10). The actual words of the reference are as follows :

“ If a certain individual has been causing pain, he has been causing pain not so much to me as to all of you—at any rate (for I am not going to overstate the case), to a section of you. This censure from the majority is severe enough for the individual in question, so that instead of censuring you should now forgive him and comfort him, in case the man is overwhelmed by excessive remorse. So I beg you to reinstate him in your love. For my aim in writing was simply to test you, to see if you were absolutely obedient. If you forgive the man, I forgive him too ; anything I had to forgive him has been forgiven in the presence of Christ for your sakes, in case Satan should take advantage of our position—for I know his manœuvres ! ” (Moffatt’s translation.)

Similarly with the Church in Galatia. To its members he wrote that if one of them committed a trespass, the Church was to restore him. The only possible hindrance to such action was spiritual pride. No member of the Church was to think himself free from personal failings, and therefore absolved from sympathy with the offender. If a man thought himself to be somebody, he deluded himself, for he was nobody. They must all learn to bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ (Gal. vi. 1-5).

“ Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness ; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbour. For each man shall bear his own burden.”

The second case is that of a man guilty of incest. The Apostle had heard that fornication was prevalent in the Church at Corinth, and that one member had been guilty of incestuous relations with his father's wife, the father being dead. The Church, instead of expelling the sinner, had tolerated him. St. Paul rebuked the Church for their attitude. They were puffed up with self-pride, when they ought to have excommunicated the offender. True, the Apostle was not with them in person, but he was in spirit. His own decision was made as if he were present with the Church, and not only he, but the power of Christ,—“ Deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh ”—in order that his spirit might be saved in the judgment at the last day. He therefore called upon the Church to deal with the offender formally and authoritatively in solemn conclave. It was not a matter which concerned the offender only, but it fell within the powers of the Church. By the parable of the leaven the Apostle showed that the Church must get rid of the cause of corruption lest it should defile the whole body. St. Paul then referred to a previous letter in which he had forbidden fellowship with the immoral. He did not mean that they were literally to avoid such persons in this world, for to do so they would have to leave the world. What he now wrote was that they were not to associate with a so-called brother who was immoral or lustful or idolatrous or abusive or given to drink or extortionate. He had no right to judge outsiders, but this Christian community must judge those within the Church. “ Expel the wicked from your company ” (1 Cor. v.).

“ It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality such as is unknown even

among pagans—that a man has taken his father's wife ! And yet you are puffed up ! You ought much rather to be mourning the loss of a member ! Expel the perpetrator of such a crime ! For my part, present with you in spirit though absent in body, I have already, as in your presence, passed sentence on such an offender as this, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ ; I have met with you in spirit, and by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ I have consigned that individual to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, in order that his spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is no credit to you. Do you not know that a morsel of dough will leaven the whole lump ? Clean out the old dough that you may be a fresh lump. For you are free from the old leaven ; *Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed*. So let us celebrate our festival, not with any old leaven, not with vice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of innocence and integrity.

“ In my letter I wrote that you were not to associate with the immoral. I did not mean you were literally to avoid contact with the immoral in this world, with the lustful and the thievish, or with idolaters ; in that case you would have to leave the world altogether. What I now write is that you are not to associate with any so-called brother who is immoral or lustful or idolatrous or given to abuse or drink or robbery. Associate with him ! Do not even eat with him ! Outsiders it is no business of mine to judge. No, you must judge those who are inside the Church, for yourselves ; as for outsiders, God will judge them. Expel the wicked from your company ” (Moffatt's translation).

What did the phrase “ delivered unto Satan ” mean ? It has been suggested, with some reason, that

it was excommunication plus a curse, the phrase being a technical expression for such a punishment (Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, revised edition, p. 302). It may also mean that the offender by being driven out of the Church was consigned to Satan's domain and that there Satan could inflict on him sickness and death. This was Semitic belief, exemplified in the Old Testament in the Passover, and in the New Testament in the case of the woman whom Satan had bound for eighteen years with a spirit of infirmity from which she had been loosed by Christ (Luke xiii. 10-17). Whatever be the meaning of the phrase, the incestuous man was to remain outside the Church till he repented. If 2 Cor. ii. refers to him, he was actually restored. But it is clear that neither slander nor fornication was held to be beyond forgiveness, that the punishments in both cases were not penal but remedial, and that they were to be inflicted not by St. Paul but by the Church assembled together judicially in the name of the Lord Jesus.

There is a third instance mentioned in the Pauline epistles. It is one of heresy. Certain teachers held that the resurrection was past already—that is to say, if man had a resurrection, it was a spiritual rising with Christ or that a man lived again in his children. Hymenæus and Alexander were such heretics whom, says St. Paul, "I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. i. 19, 20). In his Second Epistle to Timothy we find another reference to Hymenæus who is here coupled with Philetus: "men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. ii. 17, 18)

Other illustrations of discipline, some probably later than St. Paul, are to be found in the Epistles. They show not only how carefully and wisely discipline was exercised, but also that it included denouncing, rebuking, and debarring from fellowship.

Sinful elders, false teachers, and recalcitrant members of the Christian community were to be publicly rebuked. "Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear" (1 Tim. v. 19, 20).

"Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching" (2 Tim. iv. 2).

"For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Tit. i. 13).

"These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority" (Tit. ii. 15).

Friendly dealings with unbelievers and schismatics were forbidden.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Rom. xvi. 17).

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them" (Eph. v. 11, cf. 2 Cor. vi. 17).

The disorderly were to be rebuked and avoided, but the Christian must be gentle with them.

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us. . . . And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that

man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother " (2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15).

Itinerant false teachers or Antichrists were neither to be admitted to fellowship nor greeted.

" If any man cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting : for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works " (2 John 10).

Diotrephes, a leading official of the Church, had misused his powers. He had refused fellowship to authorised itinerant preachers, had ordered the brethren to do so, and had even expelled the brethren, who had welcomed the missionaries, from the community. For his ambition, he is to be denounced by the Elder when he came.

" I wrote somewhat unto the Church : but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words : and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth, and casteth them out of the Church " (3 John 9, 10).

IRREMISSIBLE SINS.

When we turn from the Pauline epistles to the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find ourselves in a different world of ideas. We hear of irremissible post-baptismal sins and also of the impossibility of granting reconciliation to those guilty of grave sin. Quite clearly, the Church was beginning to be divided on the subjects of forgiveness and discipline and beginning to be rigorist. If Tertullian is correct, the fount and origin of this extreme

rigorism is to be traced to the decree of the first Apostolic Council held in Jerusalem (Acts xv.). No other book of the New Testament definitely supports the view of *the Hebrews*. St. John probably does when he writes of "sin unto death," for which he does not advise intercession to be made. *The Hebrews* may be said to stand alone. Its severity influenced the thought and life of the Church for over two centuries until at last the Council of Nicæa in A.D. 325 pronounced that reconciliation for all sins could be obtained.

Let us first examine the decree of the Apostolic Council. It was a Council summoned in A.D. 49 to consider questions raised by the conversion of Gentiles to Christianity. The Church was then composed wholly of Jews, and one of the problems which needed a solution was whether the Gentile converts must first become Jews by being circumcised and promising to keep the law before they could enter the Christian Church. A second problem was involved in the first. If Gentile converts were allowed to enter the Christian Church not by circumcision but by baptism only, how was fellowship to be maintained—especially at social meals—for the Jewish Christian might become unclean by association (cf. Gal. ii. 11–13). Ultimately the following decree was issued by the Apostles and elders to the Gentile Churches :

"It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things ; that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication ; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you " (Acts xv. 28, 29).

Some of the texts, however, omit the words "from things strangled " and thereby alter the whole tendency

of the decree. If the decree includes all four clauses, it can be interpreted to mean that whilst only one clause, namely, fornication, relates to moral conduct, the other three clauses are a food law, namely, abstinence from sacrificial meat sold in the market, from beasts killed by strangling whose blood had not been let out, and from blood which was held sacred by the Jews. Thus three of the four rules are rules of abstinence of a ceremonial character, meant to regulate social intercourse between Jews and Gentiles. On the other hand, if the words "from things strangled," are omitted, the three clauses can be interpreted to refer to sins against morals, namely, idolatry, bloodshed, and fornication. The Bezan text, which gives only three clauses, adds to the decree the words, "do not to others what ye would not have done to you," which is morality, not ceremonial.

Many of the Fathers adopt the three-clause view and hold that there are three sins which are not remissible, but that all other burdens of the law are remissible. For example, Tertullian writes as follows on the decree: "It is enough that in this place there has been reserved to adultery and fornication the place of honour between idolatry and bloodshed." The Apostles, he goes on, have selected these three from the pristine Law. Why? "That these alone by being singled out for prominence are not remissible." . . . "The Apostles loosed us from the larger number that we might be bound to abstain from the more grievous" (*de Pudicitia*, c. 12). Even if it is uncertain that Tertullian is right, we must acknowledge that the three mortal sins in the eyes of the early Church were apostasy, fornication, and murder. The Church separated the three, and it took two centuries to rid itself of the idea that there were three sins which

could not be forgiven by God in this life. Of course there is no hint in the decree of A.D. 49 that they are unforgivable or that they are to be classified as " mortal."

The Epistle to the Hebrews will not allow that sins after baptism can be forgiven. " It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance " is the verdict of the unknown author. The Christian, he says, has received forgiveness of all sins at baptism : he has begun a new life and ought henceforward to be sinless. Lapse into any kind of sin after baptism cannot be forgiven. The sinner must be excommunicated altogether from the community without any hope of reconciliation. There is no hope for forgiveness even if he repents. " For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance ; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame " (Heb. vi. 4-6).

This severe judgment is repeated again later, but with a difference. We find that the author specially refers to apostates. The apostate cannot even hope for mercy from God ; He cannot even plead Christ's death on the Cross. He can only await the punishment of fire. If one who broke the Mosaic law, after proof of the offence, was punished by death, something much worse than death must await the man guilty of apostasy, of heresy, and of insulting the Spirit of grace. God has warned such sinners that He would punish them and judge them. " For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expecta-

tion of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses : of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace ? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God " (Heb. x. 26-31).

To apostates, the author in another passage adds fornicators. No repentance avails such grave sinners after baptism. Just as Esau's later repentance did not avail him to get the blessing he once lost, so no apostate nor fornicator who sins after baptism will be given another chance of forgiveness. " Looking carefully . . . lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright. For ye know that even when he afterwards desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it diligently with tears " (Heb. xii. 15-17).

From this rigorist attitude *St. John*, in the first Epistle which bears his name, seems to dissent. He is mindful of the teaching of later Judaism that sins done with a high hand, *i.e.* intentional sins, were unforgivable, whilst accidental and unintentional sins were forgivable. He seems to be aware, too, of our Lord's dictum on the unpardonable sin. He says that the baptized, who had received forgiveness of past sins, do sin after baptism, but " If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from

all unrighteousness" (i John i. 9). He recalls what happened at baptism, "I write unto you, my little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (ii. 12). For post-baptismal sin, there is forgiveness, too, "if we confess," since "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." On one point John admits he is uncertain, and therefore that he can only give his own opinion. Writing on the subject of intercession, and dealing with the Christian's boldness in approaching God in prayer, he says that if any man see a brother in the very act of committing a sin "not unto death," he shall pray for him with the assurance that God will hear and give the sinner grace to repent. But there is sin (or a sin) whose tendency is death, and for this John does not forbid intercession, though he advises against it. "And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: . . . If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death" (i John v. 14-17).

John is probably thinking of apostasy as the capital sin. If so, he is so far in agreement with the Epistle to the Hebrews. Apostates are antichrists "who went out from us" (ii. 18, 19), but his readers are of God and can discriminate between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (iv. 1-6). But whether or no he is thinking of apostasy as the sin unto death, he is against the austere standpoint of *the Hebrews* to this extent that he only advises against intercession for some sin which he calls a sin or sin unto death.

From the differentiation of sins in this Epistle, we get the later technical division of sins into "mortal" and "venial."

That all sins are remissible by God is suggested in the *Apocalypse*. Of the seven churches addressed in that book only two, Smyrna and Philadelphia, are praised. Five are accused of sin, but in each one a promise is given "to him that overcometh." Ephesus, whose endurance is well known, has grown weary and left its first love; Pergamum is guilty of heresy, fornication, and idolatry, though it has shown faith in persecution even unto martyrdom; Thyatira tolerates that Jezebel of a woman who calls herself a prophetess and seduces the brethren by her false teaching and her immoralities; Sardis has a few who have kept pure, but the majority have done nothing complete before God. Laodicea is lukewarm, arrogant, and self-sufficient. He calls upon each Church to repent, even Sardis, condemned most severely of all. Sinners, whether apostates, adulterers, or murderers, may all hope to overcome and to be forgiven. He calls upon the angel of each Church not to excommunicate those who sin after baptism but to lead them to repent.

St. James knows of no irremissible sins and, as we have seen, advises the sick to practise voluntary confession and to invite the prayers of the elders; in ordinary cases mutual confession and prayer will bring forgiveness.

THE GROWTH OF RIGORISM.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the author of which is unknown and is probably not an Apostle, and is certainly not St. Paul, we met with irremissible sins. This teaching strikes a discordant note, for it sets forth

that God will not forgive post-baptismal sins, and later confines these unforgivable sins to apostasy and fornication. For these irremissible sins, excommunication from the Church was final.

Our present concern is with the origin of this teaching. Why was it given? What circumstances led to it? The author is certainly a Jew, imbued with the spirit of the Priestly Code of the Old Testament. In that code, there was a class of sins for which there was no forgiveness. The author, it would seem, sees in that doctrine what he thinks will safeguard the Church and preserve its loyalty and purity. With this view many will sympathise, for a scandal in any church brings the Church into contempt, and this applies very particularly in times of persecution when the very existence of the Church is threatened.

From about the date at which the Acts of the Apostles closes to the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313) by which toleration was granted to Christianity, the Christian Church was exposed to persecution at the will of Rome. The Gospel of St. Mark "is full of the echoes of martyrdom," wrote Archdeacon Rawlinson. "The central section of the book—the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem (viii. 27–x. 45)—is already in principle a *Via Dolorosa*. The Lord goes up to Jerusalem as to a city predestined to reject Him—and so it comes to pass. Meanwhile the way of discipleship is set forth as itself also the way of the Cross. The death of Jesus is the Absolute Martyrdom, which avails as a *ransom* for many. But those who would follow Jesus in the way must themselves also be prepared for the possibility of martyrdom. The solemn question of Jesus to the two sons of Zebedee confronts all would-be disciples—" *Are ye able?* "

For 250 years was the Church persecuted. The communities of Christians, large in some cities, small in villages, knew not when they would be called upon to face death for their faith. Persecution would affect one part of the Empire at one time, and leave other parts free. The whole Church was not always called upon to suffer at the same time, but the whole Church lived in constant expectation of martyrdom at any time. Now it is evident that when a community of Christians was called upon to suffer and die, it was the glory of the whole Church that was in danger. "Let us support one another," wrote 2 Clement. Those who vacillated, even for good reason, were liable to censure. For example, the saintly Polycarp was charged with inconsistency because he had sought shelter for a while. So, too, was Cyprian who in the first persecution during his episcopate withdrew into safety that he might guide his flock. Not that such withdrawal was altogether condemned on grounds of cowardice, for it might have been wise policy. Those who did so, often faced loss and privation and suffering, and because they did not deny their faith they were generally held to be confessors. Polycarp and Cyprian proved that they were not cowards, for they were martyred later.

The necessity for staunchness in those days of persecution is obvious. It was this incidence of persecution which, in our view, was the prevailing cause of this new doctrine of forgiveness which, starting with the Epistle to the Hebrews, held sway for some centuries. It was this incidence of persecution which also governed that conception of God which was prominent at the time. He was held to be Judge rather than Father. To be in the fold of the Church and to face martyrdom was to win

salvation ; to be outside the Church by apostasy was to be in the domain of Satan.

Hence the constant reference to apostasy in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in *Hermas*, who carried on the teaching. Apostates trod under foot the Son of God, and He to whom vengeance belonged would judge them ; it was a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God. Apostates, said *Hermas*, blasphemed the Lord, and were altogether lost to God. They would not be given the one single chance of repentance which *Hermas*, in view of imminent persecution, was willing to allow others.

We may apply Dr. Rawlinson's phrase to the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Epistle is full of the echoes of martyrdom, and the sin of apostasy is mentioned within the field of those echoes. " Ye have not yet resisted unto blood " (xii. 4), says the writer. Think of the heroes of old from Abraham to the prophets ! They " stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire " . . . " others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance " . . . " others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment : they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword." With all these witnesses encircling us, let us run the race set before us, he continues, our eyes fixed on Jesus who endured the Cross, thought nothing of its shame, and is now at the right hand of the throne of God. It is for discipline that you endure. Endure, he says, for " it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God " (x. 31). You have already faced confiscation of your possessions cheerfully, knowing that you had lasting possessions elsewhere. " Cast not away your boldness " (x. 34 f.). " We are not the men to shrink back and be lost, but men

that have faith unto the saving of the soul " (x. 39). As for the apostates, they tread underfoot the Son of God, but we know him that said, " Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense " (x. 30). " Let us fear, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it " (iv. 1).

Hence the conception of God as Judge. God was implacable towards apostates in particular—a doctrine of God which, for example, spread from the Epistle to the Hebrews and from Hermas in Rome to Alexandria. But it was soon being held as the view of the Church without any reference to the Parousia (Heb. x. 37 f.), or to persecution. This conception of God was the old view of Amos. He was a God of judgment and He would judge by the law, whether Mosaic or that of the new commandments of Hermas. Hermas further held that God punished according to a scale, and that He gave repentance only to those worthy of it. Also the Old Testament idea that external circumstances were an index of forgiveness is not wanting, for Hermas wrote that losses, sickness, and suffering were visible signs of non-forgiveness.

There are other views of God in many of the writers of this period. For instance, Clement of Alexandria thinks of God as teacher and calls Jesus the Lover of man. Also God is called Father as the Church is called Mother. But the teaching of the Fatherhood of God, as the Love of God shown indiscriminately for all men, has all but vanished.

FORGIVING-NESS.

Forgiveness of others was a principle of the Christian society of the Apostolic Age. In one well-known case a

quarrel led to a breaking of friendship. Paul and Barnabas had a severe contention when John Mark left them after their missionary journey through Cyprus. Mark was the spiritual son of St. Peter (1 Pet. v. 13), and a blood relation of Barnabas. During the tour through the island, Paul had assumed the leadership of the mission which by appointment belonged to Barnabas, and had also determined to appeal to Gentiles. Mark objected, and therefore returned to his home in Jerusalem. Paul planned a new missionary journey and invited Barnabas to join him. Barnabas in his turn wished to take Mark, but Paul would not agree to consider one who "went not with them to the work." There was a sharp contention between them. So Barnabas and Paul parted in anger (Acts xv. 36-40). About six years later, Paul had occasion to mention Barnabas in his Epistle to the Corinthians, and in it we can see how miserable the Apostle had been about his share in the quarrel. For in the Epistle Paul is forgiving. He has learnt his lesson. He remembers how much he owed to the great-souled Barnabas, to the friend who had not retaliated in the "provocation" (Acts xv. 39). So when he writes his hymn on Charity, he says, "Charity is not provoked" (1 Cor. xiii. 5). In fact, the hymn is a hymn of friendship. Substitute "Barnabas" for "charity," and then we shall see how sorely Paul felt his unforgiving behaviour of the past. We hear no more of Barnabas, but eleven years after the quarrel, Mark was on friendly terms with Paul and worked with him in Rome (Col. iv. 10 f.). It was Mark whose presence Paul earnestly desired, probably during his second imprisonment (2 Tim. iv. 11). The spirit of forgiveness had healed the breach in friendship.

It was not St. Paul's only quarrel. On another occasion he had quarrelled with St. Peter on a matter of principle. The latter on a visit to Antioch had eaten with Gentiles, but when certain men arrived from Jerusalem he withdrew from all such social amenities. St. Paul therefore openly censured St. Peter for his vacillating policy.

However, throughout the Church, we may well believe that human forgiveness was being constantly shown, not only because of our Lord's teaching, but also because the Apostles taught it. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice : and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eph. iv. 31 f.). St. Paul repeats his advice in another Epistle. "Put on, therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if a man have a complaint against any ; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye : and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. iii. 12-14).

What St. Paul had taught continued to be taught. The standard of morality was rising, and the Christian communities increasingly realised the power of a forgiving spirit. Evil existed, and made its power felt. Christians wandered away from the right path ; some were punished with a rebuke, others with expulsion. But discipline was exercised in a spirit of brotherly love. "That which strikes us as great in the communities," says Dobschütz, "is pre-eminently this, that they treat seriously the demand of Jesus to forgive and rather to suffer injustice than to inflict it" (*The Apostolic Age*, p. 127).

SUMMARY.

The Christian at baptism is united with Christ and receives forgiveness of all sins after repentance. It is through the death of Christ that he is justified. But in spite of this union with Christ the Christian continues sinning. Forgiveness can now be obtained by repentance and forgiving-ness. The new condition was emphasised by our Lord because by baptism the Christian was made a partaker of the nature of God. This forgiving spirit must be unlimited and yet ethically conditioned. Forgiveness should be given only on the offender's repentance. If the offender does not repent, every effort must be made to win him back to fellowship by manifesting the forgiving spirit. If the Church is asked to use its influence and authority in a quarrel between members, it is to act on the same principles.

God will forgive every sin but one, namely, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Epistle to the Hebrews reckoned apostasy as an unpardonable sin; St. John advises against intercession for such a sin, but does not call it unforgivable.

Jesus gave the Apostles the power to forgive and retain sins. This was interpreted by the Apostles to mean the power to proclaim forgiveness of all sins and to administer baptism for remission of sins to Gentiles as well as Jews. There is no evidence that any of the Apostles gave absolution by using such a phrase as "I absolve thee."

CHAPTER XI

THE LATER HISTORY OF FORGIVENESS

IN a far-from-exhaustive sketch of the history of the centuries which followed the first century we shall attempt to trace how certain theories began and how most of them ended, theories such as that of irremissible sins, of only one repentance after baptism, of public penance, and of the power of bishops to forgive sins.

To steer a clear way through the literature of the period is a matter of difficulty, for not only were sins against the Church equated with sins against God, and final excommunication held equivalent to the loss of the hope of salvation, but the words for repentance and public penance were used with a variety of meanings. Repentance (*μετάνοια*) may mean the inward state of penitence or the acts of repentance or the acts of repentance and reconciliation. *Exomologesis* is also used ambiguously to signify either confession to God, or public admission of guilt as a step towards being reckoned a penitent, or public admission of guilt with penance, or confession, public admission of guilt and penance with or without reconciliation.

In the first few centuries the Church was being persecuted and Christians were being martyred. Forgiveness of enemies and the forgiving spirit all but suffered eclipse. Persecution and cruelty made it well-nigh impossible for the persecuted to believe that God loved the godless heathen who sought to destroy Christians. God must judge : His righteousness was His very essence.

This conception of God as a stern Judge was encouraged by teaching on the "Two Ways" which set forward lists of virtues and sins as St. Paul did. To keep clear of sins specified in these lists was to be guiltless, if not sinless after baptism, for baptism had washed away all sins committed in the past. As in the days of Amos and his successors, religion was becoming mechanical. To live by a code, to refrain from certain grievous sins, was salvation. Lighter sins were not sins against God but only against man. Tertullian, as a catholic Churchman, holds that God alone can forgive the greater sins, for they are committed against Him. The lighter sins being committed against man are the only sins which must be forgiven seventy times seven.

The Church was being called upon to face new conditions. Hence the two centuries which followed the Apostolic Age were times of vague and uncertain thinking, and occasionally of looseness in doctrine. Quotations and references to the Gospels, compared with those made from the Old Testament and the Epistles, are few even in Clement of Rome. We find such expressions as "our God, Jesus the Christ," and "the blood of God"; and Christ is spoken of as the Father. In *Hermas*, the Church is said to have been created first of all things. In one of the parables of *Hermas*, Jesus is represented as a slave who, by doing more than what was necessary, was rewarded by being made co-heir with the son, who is the Holy Spirit. The God of these early writers, except Ignatius, is not the Father revealed by Jesus, but a God far away, the Judge. It was Tertullian who in his tract on the Lord's Prayer brought out afresh the significance of the Fatherhood of God.

To turn to another aspect of immature thinking,

we may notice that man is taught to rely on himself to keep from sin. "God wills that we should be saved by our own efforts," says Clement (*Strom.* vi. 12). A sinless life was not impossible for those within the Church, for the lesser sins could be forgiven by prayer and religious exercises. Did not some of the Old Testament worthies lead a sinless life? So the baptized are to sin no more, for the grosser sins were washed away at baptism. If proofs of forgiveness were required, they were to be found in the deliverance from evils, distress, illness. Forgiveness was to be inferred from prosperity. The Church of Alexandria found forgiveness a most difficult idea, says Bigg in *Christian Platonists*. The Alexandrians believed in the changelessness of God to such an extent that they admitted "a quantitative relation between the offence and its chastisement."

The Epistle to the Hebrews influenced Hermas. Hermas influenced the early Church. To this immature, confused, and indifferent writer with his theory of one repentance may certainly be traced the beginnings of the sacramental view of penance.

Of other doctrines which emerged in this period we may mention that of merit, by which it was held that a man could do more than he need. Tertullian does not scruple to say that a good deed puts God in our debt and gives merit. "Bonum factum Deum habet debitorem, par factum habet par meritum." Augustine says that when God rewards our merits, He crowns His own gifts. Almsgiving, virginity, fasting, tears, and even prayer, are held to be the means of gaining merit. From the idea of merit came the idea of "works of supererogation."

Another method of forgiveness was that of martyrdom. The martyrs even claimed to have the power to

forgive all sins, and certificates given by them were held to be guarantees of faith. Tertullian would not allow this claim that martyrs had the power to forgive sins, but agreed that martyrs gained forgiveness by martyrdom.

The Church in the early centuries had either to maintain its purity or perish. If emphasis was laid on the outward marks of repentance, we cannot assume that the inner life of penitence was disregarded. It is the history of the outward signs of repentance that is prominent in the literature, and the sins round which discussion raged in the early centuries were those grave open sins which threatened the Church's very existence with disaster.

Our last illustration is that of the doctrine of sinlessness of Christians. In the Apostolic Age and after, baptism was the separation of the Christians from "the pomps and vanity of this wicked world." By baptism all sins of the past were washed away, and then it was hoped and even affirmed that the Christian would be sinless, and a baptized person who committed a sin was not a Christian. After baptism there was no need for another repentance and forgiveness. The light sins which are committed daily were held to be sins against man and not sins against God, and were covered by the petition for forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer.

THE SUB-APOSTOLIC AGE.

The rigorist standpoint of the Epistle to the Hebrews was not to pass unchallenged. Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp, who were in close touch with Apostolic tradition, know nothing of unforgivable trespasses or of the permanent exclusion of apostates and other grievous sinners against the Church. Clement of Rome, though he quotes from *Hebrews*, makes no

reference to irremissible sins. Not one of the three knows anything of absolution by a form of words, of private confession, or of public penance. Discipline, however, must be exercised. Clement advises wrongdoers to accept punishment as an aid to repentance, and even a verdict of excommunication, if given by a majority. Ignatius, whilst on his way to martyrdom, teaches that forgiveness from God follows repentance, if repentance is "into the unity of God and the council of the bishop." All that is necessary for divine forgiveness is repentance, provided the penitent is restored to the unity of the Church. Polycarp, also a martyr for his faith, urges the Christians of Philippi to restore those whom God has forgiven. Even Hermas, who favours the rigorist position, is compelled to break away from the standpoint of *Hebrews* in two respects. He denies the hope of repentance to only one class, namely, apostates who are also delators, men who have left the community and become informers against the Christians, and he allows one repentance for post-baptismal sin, a theory which led men to postpone repentance until they realised they were about to die.

But it was always believed that God forgave sins, that reconciliation with God was possible even for apostates at the last day. The problem which agitated the Church for some centuries was that of post-baptismal sin.

CLEMENT OF ROME (A.D. 96) was the earliest of the post-Apostolic writers. He wrote an epistle from Rome to the Church at Corinth, where the party spirit, to which St. Paul had referred in his own first epistle to the same Church, was still prevalent. In his epistle, Clement does not interfere with the right of the Corinthian Church to

regulate its own discipline, but he does not scruple to offer advice how to overcome disorders which were creating a scandal in the Church. He recalls how the Corinthians had the Holy Spirit poured upon all. "Being full of holy counsel and with earnest zeal and a godly confidence, ye stretched out your hands to Almighty God, beseeching Him to be merciful unto you, if ye had committed any sin involuntarily" (c. 2). He urges them in their present distress to fix their eyes "on the blood of Christ," because, "being shed for our salvation, it procured the grace of repentance for the whole world" (c. 7). Towards the end of his letter, Clement mentions other means of forgiveness in addition to that of repentance. Obedience with love brings forgiveness. "Blessed are we, beloved, if we should keep the commandments of God in concord of love in order that through love our sins be forgiven us" (c. 50). Prayer is once more emphasised. "Let us entreat that we may be forgiven for all the transgressions which we have committed through the wiles of the adversary." He adds to this, "It is better for a man to make confession of his transgressions than to harden his heart" (c. 51). Clement is a true pastor longing for peace in the Church; he rebukes and he appeals to the authors of sedition. If any of you disorderly leaders, he urges, is noble-minded and compassionate, let him say, "If by my action there be faction and strife and schisms, I will depart, I will go whither ye desire, and I will do what is ordered by the majority" (c. 54). He calls upon them "to submit themselves unto the presbyters and to receive correction unto repentance, bending the knees of their hearts" (c. 57). He sets before the Church their own primary duty in the distress; they must pray for the

transgressors that they may be given humility to submit "not unto us, but to the will of God" (c. 56). Clement therefore speaks and writes in the spirit of Christ, seeking for the individual sinner, urging all to repentance, and calling the Church to prayer for those who have done wrong.

IGNATIUS (c. A. D. 110) writes in a similar spirit. He has no bitter words for those who were sending him to his death by martyrdom. As for the Christians themselves, he points out in his epistle to the Philadelphians the value of repentance. "For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. And as many as shall repent and enter into the unity of the Church, these too shall be of God" (c. 3). Later he adds, "The Lord forgiveth all that repent, if, repenting, they turn to the unity of God and to the council of (or communion with) the bishop" (c. 8).

One of the cities visited by Ignatius on his way to Rome to be martyred was Philippi. Very soon after he left Philippi, the Church of that city received a letter from POLYCARP, Bishop of Smyrna. He was one who had served Christ for eighty-six years, a man so deeply revered that he was never allowed to take off his own boots. From such a man we expect much, and we are not disappointed. Though only one epistle of his is extant, the Epistle to the Philippians, yet in it we find the Christ-like spirit. Valens, once a presbyter, has failed in his loyalty to the faith. Polycarp writes of him thus: "I am deeply grieved for him and for his wife; to whom may the Lord grant true repentance"; then, addressing the Philippians, he tells them "not to count them as enemies but to restore them as weak and erring members that ye may save the whole body" (c. 11).

BARNABAS was another writer of the latter part of the first century. We do not know who he was, or to whom he wrote his epistle. The recipients are simply called "my sons and daughters" and "children of love and peace." His epistle is mainly doctrinal. He reiterates the apostolic doctrine of forgiveness through baptism; "we go down into the water laden with sins and uncleanness, and come up bearing fruit in our hearts" (c. 11). He believes in the Atonement, for Christ's death was such "that we might be sanctified through the remission of sins" (c. 5). In the second part of his epistle Barnabas writes of "the two ways" of doctrine, the one of light and the other of darkness. In the way of light we find "Thou shalt confess thy sins. Thou shalt not betake thyself to prayer with an evil conscience." As for the way of darkness, it is a way of eternal death with punishment.

Besides the letters written by Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Barnabas, there is in existence a manual of Church life and doctrine known as the DIDACHÉ, or THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES, whose date may fall between A.D. 130 and 160. The manual is in two parts, the first containing ethical teaching based on an ancient work called "The Two Ways," and the second, dealing with Church rites and the orders of the ministry. In the way of life, the readers are instructed amongst other things: "Thou shalt not hate any man, but some thou shalt rebuke, for others thou shalt pray, and others thou shalt love more than life" (c. 2). Public confession is enjoined: "Thou shalt confess thy sins in church, and shalt not betake thyself to prayer in an evil conscience" (c. 4). In the second part, the writer, urging

the use of the Lord's Prayer, which he gives in full, ends with the counsel, "Three times in the day pray ye so" (c. 8). Referring to the Agape, he again mentions public confession of sins. "On the Lord's own day assemble yourselves and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your sins that your sacrifice may be pure." Immediately afterwards he speaks of reconciliation. "Let no man having a quarrel with his brother join the congregation until they have been reconciled that your sacrifice may not be defiled" (c. 14). Further advice on discipline follows. "Reprove one another, not in anger but in peace, as taught in the Gospel. Let no man speak to any one who has done wrong to his neighbour, neither let him hear a word from you until he repent" (c. 15).

Another piece of literature of the sub-Apostolic Age is an EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS, long known wrongly as The Second Epistle of Clement. It is a homily to be read at the Eucharist after the lections. The importance of repentance is frequently taught. "As long as we are in the world, let us repent with our whole heart that we may be saved by the Lord while we have time for repentance. For after we have gone out of the world, no more can we make confession or repentance there" (c. 8; cf. 13, 16, 17, 19). This repentance must be out of a sincere heart (c. 9). Almsgiving is a good thing, as repentance from sin is. Fasting is better than prayer, and almsgiving than both; prayer out of a good conscience will deliver from death (c. 16). In his concluding words the writer asks "as a reward" that his hearers should repent with their whole heart, thereby setting a goal for the young (c. 19).

THE TWO WAYS.

In two of the writings we have considered, namely, in the Epistle of Barnabas and in the *Didaché*, mention is made of "The Two Ways"; and in each we find lengthy lists of virtues and of sins. The unknown writer of the Epistle to the Corinthians also attempts a classification, though he does not mention "The Two Ways." This cataloguing, innocent and useful though it was, had a disastrous effect on the Church. Codes of this kind were not novel. St. Paul is very partial to them. He has lists of vices in his Epistles to the Romans (i. 29-31), to the Corinthians (I. v. 10, 11; II. xii. 20), to the Galatians (v. 19-21), and to the Colossians (iii. 5, 8); he has lists of virtues in his Epistles to the Corinthians (I. xiii. 4-7; II. viii. 7), to the Galatians (v. 22, 23), to the Ephesians (iv. 32), to the Philip-pians (iv. 8), and to the Colossians (iii. 12-15). But while St. Paul is moved by love for the individual, the supporters of "The Two Ways" "are moving on the path which leads to a purely formal churchmanship of correct external observance. . . . By thrusting into the background the primary feature of redeeming grace it alters the whole balance of New Testament theology. The thought of God still dominates our post-Apostolic writers, but He is no longer conceived of as a Father whose loving purposes are the true and only canon of the law, and whose abiding and inspiring presence is the perpetual instrument of its fulfilment. He is now thought of primarily as Lawgiver and as Judge. . . . The vision of God is fading; and as it fades the characteristic dangers of Judaism come back, only thinly disguised by a veneer of Christian phrases. The process initiated by the

Didaché will be taken up by the Church Orders, the Councils of successive centuries, the rescripts of the 'servant of the servants of God,' the Penitential Books. . . . By progressive codification Christianity (in Eduard Mayer's appropriate phrase) is becoming 'mechanized' as though it were a modern army; the Church is all but completely assimilated to the model of secular society.' " These striking passages are from Dr. Kirk's *Vision of God* (lecture iii., pp. 130-137).

None of these sub-Apostolic writers mentions the non-forgiveness of apostasy or any post-baptismal sin. Repentance and confession were the normal means of forgiveness. Discipline was exercised with a loving touch, but it was not yet a system. Prayer was to be made for the offender. There was no idea of permanent excommunication. The blood of Christ procured the grace of repentance for the whole world. There were no irremissible sins. All sins could be forgiven by God. No bishop or priest as yet claimed the power to give a judicial absolution; in fact he pronounced no kind of absolution whatever. Even Bishop Ignatius, in whose view the authority of the bishop was the authority of Christ, did not forgive or retain sins by virtue of his office.

THE SECOND CENTURY

THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS, written in Rome some time in the early part of the second century, was for several centuries one of the most popular books in the Church. It was even recognised as Scripture by Irenæus. The book is particularly concerned with post-baptismal sin; and its main themes are Church discipline and repentance. Baptism to Hermas is the great sacrament,

and the Church is everything, for it was created before all things.

The book opens with five Visions, in the last of which a shepherd appears ; he is the angel of repentance and the giver of forgiveness. The shepherd proceeds to give twelve Mandata or commandments, followed by a number of Similitudes or parables.

In the opening vision Hermas, convicted of the sin of impurity by his mere desire for a woman, is advised to pray to God, who will heal his sins (1. 1). He learns that he may gain forgiveness by repentance from an aged woman, who appears to him. This aged woman, aged because she was created first of all, is the Church. She warns Hermas of the need of repentance ; repentance with all the heart will cause a sinner to be enrolled in the Book of Life (1. 3). The repentance of the righteous has limits, but to the heathen it will be possible to the last day (2. 1). In the third vision, as Hermas confesses his sins to the Lord, the aged woman again appears and tells him to make an end of always entreating for sins and to entreat for righteousness. Then, a great tower built upon the waters appears ; it is the Church built on the water of baptism. Round the tower lie some stones, others are at a distance from it, and others are falling into a fire. The vision is explained to him. The stones lying around are professing Christians, those who have sinned and desire to repent ; but they must do so while the tower is building, for if they do not repent before its completion, they will be castaways. The stones at a distance from the tower are those who have no hope of salvation in this world ; they seek baptism but find the Christian life too hard ; they cannot be fitted into the tower though they may repent, but they shall be fitted

into another place much more humble after punishment. The stones falling into the fire are those who have no desire to repent. The aged woman gets younger as she finds her warnings effective, and in the fourth vision she becomes a bride. Then she departs and sends a shepherd in her place ; he is the angel of repentance.

The shepherd on his appearance gives twelve mandates or commandments which are to take the place of the Decalogue. These mandates are a guide to Christian life, and are for those who repent. Their aim is to help all to "live unto God." They are of no value to those who will not repent, and repentance will be in vain unless the commandments are observed. The subject-matter of the mandates is as follows :

1. Believe in God and fear Him.
2. Speak evil of no man. Work that which is good, and give alms.
3. Love truth.
4. Be pure in body and in thought.
5. Be patient and long-suffering, and control an angry temper.
6. Trust righteousness, and walk in the straight path.
7. Fear the Lord, and keep His commandments.
8. Be temperate, and practise self-restraint.
9. Pray without ceasing and with confidence.
10. Put away morose sorrow, and grieve not the Spirit of God.
11. Beware of false prophets.
12. Put away all evil desire, and put on good and holy desire.

The Similitudes or parables, amidst much teaching,

give a catalogue of virtues and sins. The twelve virtues are virgins, of whom the first four are more glorious than the rest ; they are Faith, Self-Control, Power, Forbearance, Simplicity, Innocence, Purity, Cheerfulness, Truth, Understanding, Concord, and Charity. The twelve sins are twelve beautiful women, clothed in black, with bare shoulders and loose hair. They are Unbelief, Intemperance, Disobedience, Deceit, Sadness, Wickedness, Wantonness, Anger, Falsehood, Folly, Backbiting, and Hatred (9. 15).

Hermas is sometimes very unorthodox in his theology. His Holy Spirit can be defiled. " If thou defile the flesh thou shalt defile the Holy Spirit " (S. 5. 7). In another place he writes, " The law is the Son of God, proclaimed to the ends of the earth " (S. 8. 3). But on the subject of repentance he speaks in no uncertain voice. His own view is that the only remission of mortal sins is at baptism (M. 4. 3), and that no mortal sin can be forgiven after baptism. He would like therefore to support the rigorism of *Hebrews*, but he finds himself compelled to depart from it. He honestly believes that there ought to be no relapse after baptism, for a man once forgiven should sin no more. But men do sin, and Hermas sees that there is danger if discipline is wholly penal. Hence he makes a concession, since the end of the world is approaching and persecution is near at hand. He allows one chance, and one only, to grave sinners who have been baptized, but repentance and reconciliation must be by a " limiting day." The limiting day is never precisely defined by him. Apostates, however, are not allowed this privilege. Those who do not come in after repentance will be for ever excluded. By this concession, Hermas hoped to protect the Church

rather than to help the individual, for through it he reckoned he would have a considerable body who would encourage each other in the approaching persecution. This concession which Hermas made became the rule of the Church for five centuries. His influence is all the more remarkable because Hermas was no bishop but only claimed to be a prophet. He would yield no further, however, and looked askance at those who were not as rigorist as himself and treated sin lightly (S. 8. 6).

The appointed day is referred to in his Visions and Similitudes. "For the Lord hath sworn by His glory as concerning His elect, that if after this determined day sin shall be committed by any, they shall not receive salvation" (V. 2. 2, cf. S. 6. 2, 8. 6). In this quotation, no reference is made to apostates, fornicators, or murderers being outside his scheme of repentance. But in the Similitudes, he definitely excludes apostates and gives a chance to murderers and adulterers. On one occasion he asks his mentor why all do not repent, and the answer is given that the many who have repented have done so by God's compassion: "He hath given His Spirit to those who are worthy of repentance. To those whose heart He saw would become pure and serve Him with all their heart, He gave repentance; but those whose deceit and wickedness He saw, who intended to repent hypocritically, He gave no repentance, lest they should again profane His name. . . . The apostates and traitors to the Church who blasphemed the Lord in their sins, and further were ashamed of the name of the Lord by which they were called, were altogether lost to God" (S. 8. 6). In the same Similitudes, Hermas contrasts with the apostates those teachers who treat sin lightly, and he gives the latter a chance of repentance. "Those

who were hypocrites and brought in strange doctrine and subverted the servants of God, especially them that had sinned, not allowing them to repent but persuading them with foolish doctrines, have a hope of repentance." In the ninth and last Similitude, Hermas refers to them again. To the apostates and betrayers of the servants of God repentance is not open, but death lies before them. The false teachers have repentance in their power if they repent quickly, but they will suffer some punishment ; they have a chance of repentance, because they were not blasphemers like the apostates (S. 9. 19).

Hermas has nothing to say about venial sins. He defines sin as self-indulgence, and sinners are those who make pleasure their aim in life. Such are adulterers, drunkards, slanderers, liars, misers, and thieves. On account of these deceits, the self-indulgent suffer torments and are punished ; if they continue in them and do not repent, they bring death upon themselves (S. 6. 5). Punishments are meted out by an angel of punishment, who is one of the just angels ; penalties serve a high purpose, for they are a cure for self-indulgence. These punishments are such as occur in this life, for example, losses, want, divers sicknesses, various kinds of disorders, insults by unworthy persons, suffering, and failure of plans ; they must be borne as parts of repentance (S. 6. 3). Hermas has a scale of punishments ; punishment is proportional to sin. For one hour of self-indulgence, the period of torment is thirty days, and for one day of self-indulgence the torment will last a year (S. 6. 4).

Hermas has some suggestions of his own to make on discipline as an aid to true repentance. In the similitude based on our Lord's Parable of the Vineyard, the shepherd repeats the necessity of keeping the twelve command-

ments, and then adds, "If you do anything good beyond what is commanded of God, you will win for yourself more abundant glory and will be more honoured of God than you would otherwise have been." He explains what fasting is; the penitent must taste nothing but bread and water, and, having reckoned up the cost of the meat he would have had, he is to give it to a widow or orphan or one in want (S. 5. 3). To fasting may be added self-discipline; this is laid down by the shepherd in answer to a query of Hermas concerning members of his house who have repented. "I know that they have repented with their whole heart; do you think that the sins of those who repent are forgiven forthwith? Not so, but he who repents must torture his own soul and must be exceeding humble in all his conduct and be afflicted with various kinds of affliction, and if he endure these afflictions which come upon him, He who created all things and endued them with power will assuredly be compassionate and will heal him" (S. 7).

In his book, Hermas discloses to us the views of the Church in Rome a short time after Clement wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians. There is a change; the Church has become more rigorist, though not so rigorist as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The expulsion from the community for the three grievous sins was feared because it was believed that to be outside the Church was to be beyond the hope of salvation. No one, according to Cyprian, could have God for father who had not the Church for mother. According to Hermas, restoration to the fellowship of the Church was harder to obtain than forgiveness from God. A man guilty of apostasy, one of the three capital sins, was only allowed one opportunity of reconciliation

with the Church, but he might gain forgiveness for his sin on the Last Day.

Hermas must have known the Bible, but he never quotes directly from it ; he never speaks of Jesus or of Christ, never refers to our Lord's death, never mentions a single incident in His life. Baptism, the Church, Repentance, and Punishment are the things which concern him most. He was uneducated, but speculative. Hardly moral in the past (for he admits he never in his life spoke the truth, but lived deceitfully and affirmed a lie as truth), he was converted (M. 3). With weeping and fasting and self-discipline, added to the discipline of the Church, he sought forgiveness, and having found the way of repentance he believed that he would henceforth be sinless, for the venial sins did not trouble him.

IRENÆUS gives two stories which bear on our subject. Marcus, a sensualist, had betrayed and insulted the persons of many women. A deacon of the Church welcomed him into his house, but his beautiful wife became enamoured of the visitor, left her home, and travelled about with him. The brethren sought her and converted her. From that time she spent her life in public confession, tears, and lamentations for the defilement she had received (*Hær.*, i. 135). The word for confession used in this reference is *exomologesis*.

In the second story, Irenæus tells us how Cerdon, a heretic in the time of Bishop Hyginus of Rome, made frequent public confessions and was frequently forgiven, though Hermas of Rome only allowed one chance of repentance after baptism. At last, his hypocrisy being exposed, he was denounced and excommunicated (*Hær.* iii. 4. 3).

EPIPHANIUS tells us that Marcion, Cerdon's successor, for betraying a Christian virgin was excommunicated and refused reconciliation by his own father, the Bishop of Sinope. Marcion then sought it in Rome, but was again refused. He then separated from the Church and allowed his followers frequent opportunities for repentance, and even rebaptized them (*Hæv.* 43. 4.).

EUSEBIUS in his Ecclesiastical History gives three illustrations which show that new ideas were beginning to prevail. He tells us that Dionysius of Corinth (A.D. 171) enjoined the Church to receive all grave offenders, whether guilty of heresy or of immorality (iv. 23). In the account of the sufferings of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, Eusebius reports that apostates who repented and confessed were reckoned as martyrs ; further, that martyrs conferred benefits on the apostates, and that much joy was begotten in the virgin mother (the Church) because the apostates retraced their steps and learned to make confession of their faith (v. 1). Mitigation of the stern position of Hermas is evident in all five instances given above. The third illustration given by Eusebius indicates that a system of public penance was being created. Natalius, bishop of a heretical sect, heedless of visions calling on him to return, was lashed by holy angels and punished. This converted him. So he rose early in the morning, put on sackcloth, and covered himself with ashes ; then, bathed in tears and beaten with the lash, he prostrated himself before the bishop and rolled at the feet of the clergy and laity. Natalius was with difficulty admitted to communion (v. 28).

Thus by the end of the second century, public

confession (*exomologesis*) was in operation in the Church for grievous post-baptismal sin. Then the penitent was received back into fellowship. Hermas of Rome permits only one opportunity of repentance to all but apostates ; elsewhere more kindly treatment is meted out to all grave sinners. During these first two centuries no Church or bishop claims to possess the power of forgiving sins. There is also yet no system of penitential discipline. This came with Tertullian.

THE THIRD CENTURY

In the THIRD CENTURY the mind of the Church is seen to harden. Only one chance of forgiveness awaits those guilty of mortal sins, and to get the benefit of remission the sinner must be willing to undergo the humiliation of a public confession and penance. " Lesser " sins are of no grave importance and can easily win forgiveness, but not the sins of adultery, apostasy, and murder. The influence of *The Shepherd of Hermas* has extended to Alexandria, where a catechetical school was established for the teaching of theology and Biblical criticism.

CLEMENT was the master of the school from A.D. 190-203, and in one of his three extant works, which form a graduated course of instruction, he constantly quotes from Hermas. This work is the *Stromateis*, or the *Miscellanies*. Like Hermas, he allows a second repentance for those who sin after baptism. Now Hermas was led to his action because of the imminence of persecution and of the end of the world. The acceptance by Clement, therefore, shows that the concession made by Hermas of Rome has become the view of the Church in

Alexandria, but without any reference to the circumstances which influenced Hermas.

Clement's theory is as follows. He makes a concession, but it is only for those overcome by force or fraud. The men who have been forgiven at baptism ought to sin no more, but they do. So God's mercy gives to those among the faithful a second repentance, provided they do not sin wilfully. He quotes *Hebrews* : " For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment." He argues that continual successive repentance for sins differ nothing from the case of those who have not believed, except only in this that they are conscious that they sin. " The frequent asking for forgiveness is not repentance but only the semblance of it " (*Stromateis*, ii. 13). To an adulteress, however, a special favour is granted ; like Hermas, Clement gives her a second chance. " She who has committed fornication liveth in sin and is dead to the commandments ; but she who has repented, being as it were born again by the change of her conduct, hath regeneration of life ; the old harlot being dead, she who has been born again by repentance has come back again to life " (S. ii. 23).

Clement defines repentance. Repentance is a tardy knowledge and the effect of faith. " Repentance is great intelligence, for he that repents for what he did no longer does or says as he did. But by inflicting himself for his sins he benefits his soul " (S. ii. 6, 22). Very strangely, though he built up his theory from *Hebrews* and from Hermas, he contravenes it by saying that our teacher is God and that no man can be influenced by the exhortations of any of the saints as by the words

of the Lord Himself, the Lover of man (*An Exhortation to the Heathen*, c. 9). One whole book is entitled *The Tutor*, by whom he means Jesus Christ, the Sinless One. He says in this book that we should try to sin as little as possible. Those who are called back to repentance should renew the fight. Sin is a disease, and the Saviour is the Physician of mankind. The Physician heals by precepts and gifts, saying to us, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (*The Tutor*, i. c. 2). It is God who seeks our repentance (i. c. 8). He leads us to repentance to promote salvation (i. c. 10).

Clement quotes the Lucan saying on forgiving seven times in a day, but makes no comment on it (iii. c. 12).

TERTULLIAN of Carthage was the first of the Fathers to write in Latin. He is the founder of Latin Christianity. He is as intolerant as the author of *Hebrews*, particularly during his Montanist days. His love for the Church is marked. He is also the first to proffer an ordered system of penitence. Two of his tracts, to which we first refer, were written in his catholic and pre-Montanist days. The first is that on Prayer. In explaining the petition for forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, Tertullian writes: "A petition for pardon is a complete confession because he who begs for pardon freely admits his guilt. Thus, too, repentance is shown to be acceptable to God, who desires it rather than the death of the sinner." Tertullian then refers to the Unforgiving Servant and the Seventy Times Seven, and with this latter he contrasts Lamech's boast (c. 7). When we pray, he says later, we must "compose whatever strife or wrong we have contracted with our brethren. For what kind of deed is it to approach the peace of God without peace, the forgiveness of debts

while you retain them? How will he who is angry with his brother appease his Father when from the beginning all anger is forbidden us? " (c. 11).

Tertullian in his tract on Repentance is a hard disciplinarian. He supports Hermas in allowing one chance of repentance, but he is more tolerant in saying that all sins can be forgiven in this second repentance. This second repentance is, however, an ordered system. It is also so exacting that he fears it will not lead men to accept it. He therefore argues his case to make sinners conform to it. In it, forgiveness follows automatically on the completion of the penance, without any form of words.

Repentance, says Tertullian, is an emotion of the mind arising from disgust of a worse feeling (c. 1). It comes from God and is subject to His laws. Sins are of two kinds—corporeal when in deed, and spiritual when in thought. Both kinds are subject to punishment, for the Lord has warned us that sins of the will or thought, as well as sins by acts, are forbidden (c. 3). Yet to both kinds of sin God has promised pardon by means of repentance. Repentance should be embraced as eagerly as a shipwrecked man embraces the safety of a plank. It should be practised, both because it is good in itself and because God commands it (c. 4). Repentance once undertaken ought never again to be repeated, for this is contumacy (c. 5). Baptism has brought complete forgiveness of past sins, and by it we have escaped once. The baptized should not sin. If they lapse after baptism, the gate is still open, but not so wide as before; in the vestibule stands a second Repentance whose gate of forgiveness will open to those who knock, but it will not open twice (c. 7).

This second repentance is laborious. The act is known as *exomologesis*; it is a discipline to move God to mercy. The penitent must lie in sackcloth and ashes, cover his body with sordid attire, partake only of plain food and drink, weep, lie prostrate at the feet of the presbyters, kneel before the brethren, and enjoin them to intercede with him.

Exomologesis, when it condemns, absolves (c. 9). Men may shrink from it because of the public humiliation, but it is like unpleasant medicine which is needed for a cure (c. 10). Men may likewise dread its bodily inconvenience, but is it becoming that we should supplicate in scarlet and purple? (c. 11). If you shrink from this public discipline, consider how it extinguishes hell for you. Think of the Babylonian king who made *exomologesis* by a seven years' squalor! (c. 12).

De Pudicitia.—Twenty years after he wrote his tract on Repentance, Tertullian joined the Montanists, who were very strict on the sin of impurity. Now he becomes more rigorist. He hears that Callistus, Bishop of Rome (A.D. 218–223), had admitted to reconciliation persons guilty of impurity, and has issued an “edict.” He resents the action of Callistus, and looks on it as an encouragement to mortal sin. In answer he writes the tract *De Pudicitia*. No more will he allow, as he did in his Catholic days, that all sins are remissible. As for the claim of some bishops to forgive sins against God, he goes so far as to say the Church has the power. “But I will not do it.” God alone can pardon sin. He will not allow that bishops by virtue of their office can forgive sins. It is only the spiritual among them who can exercise this power: by this he means that the spiritual prophets of Montanism can forgive sins.

In this tract on Modesty, he admits he has changed his views. "I do not blush at an error which I have ceased to hold. . . . No one blushes at his own improvement." An edict has been set forth and "that a peremptory one." It says, "I remit the sins of adultery and fornication to those who have fulfilled their repentance." Think of it! This edict is read in the Church! And "the Church is a virgin!" To pardon adulterers and fornicators is to act "in the teeth of the primary discipline of the Christian name."

He goes on to say that there are two grades of sin, some remissible, some irremissible, and accordingly some deserve punishment and some condemnation. A sin unto death is irremissible, and it is to this class of sin that adultery belongs. Repentance cannot obtain pardon for such sin in this life (c. 2) but may be a means of mercy from God at the last day. "If it reaps not the harvest of peace here, it yet sows the seed of it with the Lord: it loses not its fruit but prepares it" (c. 3). If adulterers are to be forgiven and reconciled now, why not idolaters and murderers? Is not adultery forbidden in the Decalogue along with idolatry and murder? Do they not have to undergo the same system of penitence? (c. 5). The Parable of the Lost Coin cannot apply to mortal sin such as adultery, for adultery is not a drachma but a talent (c. 7). The Parable of the Prodigal Son does not apply to adulterers after baptism, for the prodigal was an unbaptized person (c. 9). But Martyrdom can win forgiveness for all and every offence (c. 9). *The Shepherd of Hermas*, he says, gave a second repentance to adulterers, but the book is not canonical. It is apocryphal. "The scripture of the Shepherd is the only one which favours adulterers" (c. 10).

The apostolic decree forbade idolatry, fornication, and bloodshed (pages 204 ff.). There are three other mortal sins; they are fraud, apostasy, blasphemy. These mortal sins are incapable both of pardon and of reconciliation into the Church. The lighter sins for which repentance is available include those of daily occurrence such as anger lasting beyond sunset, violence, evil-speaking, rash-swearing, breaking one's word, and lying. Also in the list of lighter sins are those committed in business, in official duties, in trade, in eating, in sight, in hearing (c. 19). For these lighter sins committed after baptism, pardon can be obtained from the bishop. The minister of reconciliation for lighter sins for which penance has been done is the bishop. God alone can pardon the greater and irremissible sins (c. 18): this is His prerogative, for mortal sins are committed against Him and against His temple. As for the lighter sins, they are not in the same sense committed against God but against a man personally; these have to be forgiven seventy times seven (c. 21).

Hitherto the Church has made no claim that it had the power to forgive "sins against God." There is no such claim in Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, the *Didaché*, or Hermas. But, early in the third century, there is a passage in Tertullian which shows that the idea was being discussed. Tertullian does not agree. "But, you say, the Church has the power of forgiving sins. This I acknowledge. . . . The Church has the power to forgive sin, but I will not do it, lest they commit further sins." The commission to Peter of the power of loosing and binding "had nothing to do with the capital sins of believers." The key given to Peter was "to unbar, in Christ's baptism, the entrance to the

heavenly kingdom." Then, he adds, "the Church, it is true, will forgive sins. But it will be the Church of the Spirit, by means of a spiritual man, not the Church which consists of a number of bishops. For the right and arbitrament is the Lord's, not the servant's; God's, not the priest's" (c. 21).

The martyrs claimed the power to remit sins. But they have no such authority. The adulterer, no less than the apostate and murderer, can gain forgiveness, not through the martyrdom of others, but by being martyred himself (c. 22).

ORIGEN.—The greatest of the ante-Nicene fathers was the successor of Clement of Alexandria. He was a voluminous writer, but much of his critical work has been lost. He lived in Cæsarea from A.D. 231–250.

In his work, *De Oratione*, § 28, he divides sin into three classes :

1. Incurable sins—adultery, apostasy, and murder.
It is impious to absolve them. They are irremissible. Some presbyters boast that they can grant forgiveness for these sins, but such priests are to be condemned. They forget that there is a sin unto death.
2. Grave sins. These can only be forgiven once ; for them only one repentance is available after baptism.
3. Minor sins. For these no formal penitence is necessary. People must repent daily. Forgiveness for them can be always obtained. These sins do not involve penalties.

Origen is as critical as Tertullian on the claim of some of the bishops to forgive and retain sins. He

admits they have inherited the power of the Apostles, but it depends on the character of the claimants. They must be what Peter was. He then continues: "They rightly affirm this, if they have the ministry on account of which it was said to Peter, 'Thou art Peter,' and if they are men of such kind that upon them the Church is built by Christ, and that to them this saying would be rightly ascribed. The gates of hell ought not to prevail against him when he wills to bind and loose. But if he is bound by the chains of his sins it is in vain that he either binds or looses. . . . But if any, not being Peter, and not having the qualities just stated, think like Peter to bind upon earth so that what things are bound are bound also in heaven, and to loose upon earth so that what things are loosed are loosed also in heaven, this man is blind, not understanding the meaning of the scriptures, and being lifted with pride has fallen into the condemnation of the devil" (*Commentary on Matthew*, xvi. 18). No bishop can forgive grave sins by virtue of his office, but only those can forgive who are spiritual men breathed upon by Jesus as were the Apostles. "We all have the power to forgive sins against ourselves. This is evident from the words, 'as we forgive our debtors,' and again, 'for we also forgive every one indebted to us.' But he who has been breathed upon by Jesus as the apostles were, and who can be known from his fruits as one who has received the Holy Spirit, and is become a spiritual man in that he is led by the Spirit like the son of God to each one of those things which are done according to reason; such a one remits the sins which God remits and retains the sins which are incurable, ministering to God as the prophets ministered in saying not their own words but those of the Divine will. So

also he is a minister to God, Who alone has the power to forgive" (*De Oratione*, § 28).

But if the sinner cannot receive reconciliation into the fellowship of the Church there are not lacking means by which he can win pardon from God (*Homily on Leviticus*, 2). These modes are seven in number :

Baptism.

Martyrdom.

Almsgiving. This according to Christ's words that when you give alms "all things are clean unto you."

Forgiveness of others. This is in accordance with the Lord's Prayer and its corollary.

Conversion of sinners. James said "that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (v. 20).

Fullness of love. This is illustrated by the Woman who was a sinner, and the saying "Charity shall cover a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. iv. 8).

Penance in public. This consists of private confession to a bishop who will prescribe the remedy, which includes tears and fasting. Psalm xxxii. 5 and James's advice to the sick apply here.

Origen is one of the very few Fathers who mention the primary condition of divine forgiveness. We also note that no absolution is given by the priest of the Lord ; his part is to hear the confession and to advise the penitent. Origen in another homily speaks of confession to a physician, and warns that great care should be taken in choosing him. "Approve the physician to whom thou

shouldest expose the cause of thy malady " (Ps. xxxvii.). In the passage the priest is not said to be the physician, nor is there any connexion between confession and public penance.

Martyrdom effects remission of all kinds of past sins. In the *Exhortation to Martyrdom* Origen goes further than Tertullian on the subject of martyrs. " The souls of those beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, serving the altar in heaven not in vain, minister remission of sins to those who supplicate " (30).

In his *Contra Celsum*, Origen disputes the assertion of Celsus that those given to sin by nature and habit cannot be changed even by punishment. Conversion, he argues, is possible for the very worst sinners whether by nature or by habit (iii. 66). Celsus has also cast a slur on the value of repentance and conversion of heart by saying that God came only to save sinners and not those " who sin no more." Why this preference for sinners? asked Celsus. Origen replies that God came to save sinners and those who call themselves righteous. All men sin (iii. 62). In a special reference to apostasy, Origen says that demons perceive that those who deny their faith under suffering come under their power and therefore feel a keen interest in Christians on their trial (viii. 44).

CYPRIAN (Bishop of Carthage A.D. 248-258).

Two persecutions helped the Church towards a broader outlook on penitential discipline. One was the Decian persecution of A.D. 250, during which Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, bestowed reconciliation on apostates, and, more important still, taught that God's forgiveness was impossible unless all men, even martyrs, acted in a like way in regard to their debtors. Cyprian made a

big breach in the fortress of rigorism, a breach which was widened after the great persecution in the time of Diocletian. For then councils of the Church proclaimed that reconciliation was possible for all sins, including apostasy, adultery, and murder.

It took another three centuries before the theory of only one or two opportunities of public repentance for post-baptismal sin was discarded. Then a new theory was evolved to take its place, and six centuries later, through the influence of Aquinas, the sacramental theory of absolution prevailed.

In the widespread apostasy which followed the Decian persecution in A.D. 250, Cyprian took the lead in guiding the future policy of the Church. Callistus of Rome had established a precedent for the reconciliation of adulterers after repentance, and now Cyprian, after serious thought, and in spite of Novatian opposition, proceeded to admit apostates who had submitted to penitential discipline. Hardly any reference is made in the writings of the Fathers to the third "mortal" sin of bloodshed.

Cyprian was faced with the problem of apostasy even before the persecution broke out. Some sacrificed to pagan gods, others sprinkled incense on heathen altars, others procured a certificate to say that they had sacrificed when in fact they had not. To quote his own words: "Immediately at the first words of the threatening foe, the large majority of the brethren betrayed their faith, and were cast down not by the onset of the persecution but by voluntary lapse. . . . Many were conquered before the battle. . . . They ran to the marketplace of their own accord" (*De Lapsis*, 7 and 8). Cyprian's problem was complicated by the fact that for

a hundred and fifty years the Church had held that for those who sacrificed to idols and were apostates no reconciliation in this life was possible, though they might hope for mercy from God.

When the persecution broke out, Cyprian felt he was justified in seeking refuge so that he might guide the Church. This he did by letters till peace was restored. He himself was martyred in a persecution of A.D. 258, but not before he had won the battle for tolerance.

In the absence of Cyprian, the Roman clergy felt it incumbent on them to write to their fellow-sufferers in Carthage and remind them of their duty. In their letter they state that as regards those who had fled, "the Church did not abandon them, though they were separated from us, but exhorted them and does exhort them to repent, if in any way they may receive pardon from Him who is able to grant it." Carthage is advised to do the same ; for if the faithless " are seized again, they may confess and so make amends for their past sin." Mitigation is urged in case of sickness : " if any who have fallen into temptation are taken ill and repent of what they have done and desire communion, it should be granted them " (Epistle 2). The Roman Church, it will be noticed, does not claim any supremacy over the Church at Carthage.

The problems faced by Cyprian may be gathered from his letters. Certain presbyters had hastily granted peace to apostates without the knowledge of the bishop, who was the minister of reconciliation for sins which were not mortal. Cyprian therefore wrote to the clergy, and in his epistle mentions that such action was wrong, and that reconciliation was formally given, not by words of absolution, but by the laying on of hands. " For

although sinners do penitence in smaller sins for a definite time, and according to the rules of discipline come to *exomologesis* and receive the right of communion by the imposition of the hands of the bishop and clergy ; now, with their time still unfulfilled, while persecution is still going on and the peace of the Church itself is not yet restored, they are admitted to communion, and the offering is presented in their name, and though the penitence is not yet performed and their *exomologesis* not yet made, and the hands of the bishop and clergy are not yet laid upon them, the Eucharist is given to them " (Epistle 9).

This warning against unauthorised action is repeated in an Epistle to the Martyrs and Confessors, who sought that peace should be given to the lapsed. Cyprian also advises them to designate to him by name those to whom they grant certificates, " But they must be those whom you have known, whose penitence you see to be very near to full satisfaction " (Epistle 10).

In a letter to the people, Cyprian refers again to the hasty action of the presbyters. He also speaks of himself, bishop of Carthage, as *sacerdos* or priest, and of smaller sins—that is, sins which are not mortal, as sins not committed against God. " I hear that certain presbyters, neither mindful of the gospel nor considering what the martyrs have written to me, nor reserving to the bishop the honour of his priesthood and of his chair (*sacerdotii sui et cathedræ*), have already begun to communicate with the lapsed and to offer on their behalf and to give them the Eucharist when it was fitting that they should attain to these things in due course. For whereas in smaller sins which are not committed against God, penitence may be performed in a definite time, and

confession may be made and the life of him who is performing the penitence is under investigation ; and whereas no one can come to communion unless the hands of the bishop and clergy be laid upon him, how much more in these gravest and most extreme sins ought all such matters to be observed with caution and moderation according to the discipline of the Lord " (Epistle 11).

Forgiveness.—The bishop is the minister of absolution normally, says Cyprian, but in emergency a priest or even a deacon may give peace to those who hold a martyr's certificate, by laying on of his hands. This is his verdict in a letter to the clergy concerning the lapsed. " In order that they who have received certificates from the martyrs and may be helped by their privilege with God, if they should be overtaken with any misfortune and danger of sickness, should, without waiting for my presence, before any presbyter who might be present, or if a presbyter should not be found and death seems imminent, before even a deacon, be able to make confession of their sin, so that with the imposition of hands upon them for repentance, they should come to the Lord with the peace which the martyrs have desired by their letters to us to be granted to them " (Epistle 12).

Cyprian clearly shows, when he allows deacons to grant forgiveness by the laying on of hands that there is no sacramental absolution involved in the act. The imposition of hands by the deacon only gave the peace to the dying penitent. A deacon never possessed any sacramental authority.

Cyprian thus grants absolution to lapsed penitents at the point of death if they hold an indulgence granted by a martyr. The next year, A.D. 251, he grants absolution to all penitents at the point of death without a martyr's

certificate. He had now returned from his exile, and, after various councils had been held, Cyprian took the final step of granting absolution to all penitents. In A.D. 252 he wrote to Antonianus : " If God shall find the repentance of these sinners full and sound, He will then ratify what shall have been here determined by us " (Epistle 52, § 18). This policy was promulgated at the Council of Carthage, and was supported in the East by the Council of Antioch the same year. The rigorism of the Epistle to the Hebrews began to be rejected by most bishops from this time onwards.

Two years later, when peace was temporarily restored, Cyprian wrote a tractate on the lapsed, *De Lapsis*. In it he mentions confessions to be made only to the *sacerdotes*, who, as we saw above, are the bishops. He has to deal with cases of men who had merely thought of apostasy ; who " although bound by no crime of sacrifice or of certificate, yet since they have thought of such things make confession of this sin of thought to God's *sacerdotes* with grief and simplicity, make an *exomologesis* of their conscience, put off from them the load of their minds, and seek out a salutary medicine even for slight and moderate wounds, knowing that it is written, ' God is not mocked ' " (§ 28). Cyprian widens his dictum and advises confession ordinarily. " I entreat you, beloved brethren. that each one should confess his own sin, while he who has sinned is yet in this world, while his confession may be received, while the satisfaction and remission made by the *sacerdotes* are pleasing to the Lord " (§ 29) At the close of the tract he refers again to the lapsed " whose fear is ready toward God." He tells them that they are to acknowledge the sin of their conscience and make a repentance equal to their

sin, to pray more eagerly, to spend the days in grief and the nights in tears, to lie stretched on the ground, clinging close to the ashes and surrounded with sackcloth and filth, to be earnest in righteous works and almsgiving, and then like a soldier to seek the contest again. "He who thus makes atonement to God shall make the Church which he has saddened glad, and shall now deserve of the Lord not only pardon but a crown" (§ 36). In all these references, Cyprian is thinking of the greater sins, and more particularly of possible apostates, and the "salutary medicine" is clearly felt to be very wholesome.

Forgivingness.—The persecution looms so largely in the story of Cyprian's episcopate that sight has often been lost of a sin which is held by him to be even more grievous than the three sins held to be mortal. Reference is made to it in his tract on the Lord's Prayer when he speaks on the petition for forgiveness. This tract is of fundamental importance, for Cyprian, who fought for tolerance against rigorism, has grasped how primary a condition human forgiveness is for obtaining divine forgiveness. No other writer of the ante-Nicene age has appreciated the meaning of the petition as he has. In his explanation he quotes passages from the scriptures which bear on the petition, *e.g.* The Unforgiving Servant, "If we say that we have no sin," etc. (1 John i. 8); "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again"; the corollary to the Lord's Prayer in Mark's version (xi. 25); and lastly, "He who hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15), with the comment, "no murderer attains to the kingdom of heaven, nor does he live with God." His interpretation of the petition may be realised from the following quotations :

“Lest any should flatter himself that he is innocent, and by self-exaltation should more deeply perish, he is taught that he sins daily in that he is bidden to entreat for his sins, . . . knowing that what we seek for our sins cannot be obtained unless we ourselves have acted in a like way in regard to our debtors.” “There remains no ground of excuse in the day of judgment, when you will be judged according to your own sentence.” “He who has not peace with the brethren, . . . even if he have been slain for the name of Christ, shall not be able to escape the crime of brotherly dissension.” “How great is the sin which cannot even be washed away by a baptism of blood! How heinous the crime which cannot be expiated by martyrdom!”

THE COUNCIL OF NICÆA.

The second persecution which helped to solve the problem of reconciliation of the lapsed was that which broke out in A.D. 303. It was the last persecution which fell on the Church, and it ended in A.D. 313. We read that in this period Peter of Alexandria treated apostates with kindly discrimination, that the length of penance varied with the nature of the lapse. Those who fell through cowardice performed a penance of three to four years, those who fell through imprisonment, one year, and those through torment, forty days. With the restoration of peace, the subject was taken up by a succession of Councils. In the West, the Council of Arles granted reconciliation for apostates after repentance; in the East, the Council of Ancyra in 314 granted reconciliation for all sins under a system of graded penance, varying numbers of years being spent in each grade. A penitent was first placed among the Hearers, then the

Fallers, and lastly amongst the Prayers. Then came the great Council of Nicæa in A.D. 325, which gave reconciliation for all mortal sins before death. This was done by giving the sick man the Eucharist. "As a general rule," says canon 13, "in the case of any one who is passing away who asks to partake of the Eucharist, let the bishop give it to him after careful inquiry." It was finally adopted by the Council of Laodicea about twenty years later, when reconciliation for all offences was given to those who repented for a period which varied with the offence.

Thus, after two hundred years, the Church once more exercised the ministry of reconciliation in the spirit of Christ.

AFTER NICÆA.

The theory of only one opportunity for repentance was the next to disappear. In the East, it was given up almost immediately ; in the West, only after three centuries of questioning. We shall therefore have to sketch the course of history in the East and West separately.

In the East, discipline relaxed with the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, but it had to be maintained somehow. Different centres tried different systems. We have mentioned the system of graded penance. It was attempted in Asia Minor, where there were four grades : The Mourners, who were suppliants for the position of penitents and stood outside the basilica or church ; the Hearers, who stood within the vestibule and heard the sermon and the lessons of the Liturgy ; the Kneelers, who knelt in the nave during the prayers whilst others stood, but withdrew when the solemn part of the Eucharist, the anaphora, began ; and lastly, the By-

standers, who stood for the prayers with the faithful, and remained during the service, but were not to communicate. A murderer did ten years' penance, two as a mourner, three as a hearer, four as a kneeler, and one as a bystander. An adulterer did fifteen years, four plus five plus four plus two in each respective grade. Every penitent was thus granted reconciliation, whatever the sin. At the end of the penitence the sinner partook of communion without any act of reconciliation. There is no mention of any verbal form of absolution in the writings of Basil of Cæsarea, whose system it is that we have described.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM did away with the theory of one repentance without any hesitation, first in Antioch, and later in Constantinople. Objecting to long periods of discipline, the publicity involved in penitential acts, and the severity of the past, he considers the old system valueless. It is mechanical, he says, and adds that the penitence to be effective must be voluntary. The value of repentance is not to be judged by time, but by sincerity. "Open your conscience to God, show Him the wounds, and ask Him for the cure. Show to Him who heals and does not upbraid." Another of his striking sayings is this: "God asks nothing more for the forgiveness of sins than a full determination to forsake them." In fact, Chrysostom, like Origen, propounds various methods by which forgiveness may be obtained. He holds that forgiveness may be obtained for every sin, whether mortal or venial, by one or other of the methods, though he hopes that the penitent will exercise them all and not only occasionally, but daily. Two of these methods are shown in the two quotations made

above, namely, Repentance and Confession. Confession is private confession to a priest ; " Show thy wounds to a priest." Yet confession may be made in church, " If we enter the Church, if we mourn for our sins, if we confess our sins, if we do alms, if we say prayers, if we aid the oppressed, if we forgive our enemies their trespasses, if we weep for our offences ; for all these are the medicines for our sins." These words were spoken when he was bishop of Constantinople, and give us some of his other modes of forgiveness. Of the power of the priesthood to absolve, he has no uncertainty. " What the priests do here below, God ratifies above ; the Master confirms the verdict of His servants." Thus recourse to the priest is one of the many ways in which the sinner may gain forgiveness. This wide invitation to sinners roused hostile action from other bishops, and he was brought before a synod and deposed ; they charged him among other things for making sinners " fearless," teaching them, " If thou sin again, repent again, and as often as thou sinnest, come to me and I will heal thee."

Chrysostom therefore taught that human forgiveness was one of the methods of obtaining divine forgiveness. Only the faithful can say the Lord's Prayer, he argues, and therefore the petition clearly holds true for all sins committed after baptism.

When Chrysostom went as bishop to Constantinople, he found that that city had been forbidden to go to private confession. A scandal had arisen over a private confession, and his predecessor had therefore stopped the practice at once. Chrysostom had to build up some system, and he followed the policy of toleration on a wide scale. Each sinner was left to choose his own method of discipline.

In Alexandria, it was taught by Cyril that the commission given to the Church applied to every one. Were not the words spoken by our Lord before there were any baptisms? Hence the commission meant the power to grant or refuse baptism to those outside. Those within the Church were forgiven after repentance by the priest. It is the Holy Spirit who remits and retains, though the act of forgiveness is effected by man.

IN THE WEST discipline was not so lax as in the East. The belief in one repentance after baptism prevailed for about three centuries after Nicæa. But public penance was almost set aside ; this is evident from the publicity given by Jerome to the case of Fabiola, who undertook a voluntary penance. " God considers not the sentence of the bishop, but the life of the penitent," says Jerome. The practice in Rome about A.D. 400 was to reconcile by the laying on of the bishop's hands and prayer, but soon priests were permitted to hear confessions and to judge whether penitence was adequate, but not to bestow absolution through the laying on of hands and prayer—a rite performed on a fixed day, namely, Maundy Thursday. The Bishop continued to be the minister of absolution and reconciliation. In the *Gelasian Sacramentary* the formal act is a prayer said by the Bishop ; in Africa it is the imposition of hands. According to Leo the Great, bishop of Rome A.D. 440-461, " the indulgence of God cannot be obtained without the supplication of the bishop, . . . in this work the Saviour Himself shares." The bishop therefore acts as a mediator and his power is precatory. His presence is essential for the reconciliation of the penitent. There is no reference to absolution, however. Leo condemned public confession, hoping

by this means to provoke a larger number to private confession. "That confession is sufficient which is offered first to God and then to the bishop who approaches as a suppliant for the sins of those who repent." The bishop prays with the penitent, but does not pronounce absolution by a form of words. This is the first instance in the West of the system of private confession.

In Milan, Ambrose is aware of the hesitation of Christians to do public penance. He is in favour of the old system of *exomologesis* and of the theory of one repentance after baptism. "Daily repentance is for lighter sins, public penitence for grave sins, and for these a remedy can be sought only once." All sins can be forgiven by bishops, but it is God who forgives, and man who exercises the ministry of reconciliation. "Men ask and the Godhead grants," and men forgive "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Augustine of Hippo is a disciple of Ambrose. "For the lighter sins . . . the daily prayer of the faithful with its daily mention of our trespasses suffices." But there are the three capital sins, and they can be cured by penitence. Even if a second penitence is not allowed, yet the sinner can win pardon from God by amendment (*Epistle*, 153, c. 3).

On the claim of the priesthood to grant divine forgiveness, Augustine says in one of his sermons that it was blasphemy to say, "I absolve thy sins" (99. 8), and in another that God forgives or condemns independently of the action of the priest (40. 5). In Africa, the ordinary minister of reconciliation is the bishop, but priests may reconcile in emergency; penitents are reconciled with a formal imposition of hands.

By the seventh century public penitence in the West

became a ceremony in Lent. The penitent is admitted to penance on Ash Wednesday, spends Lent in retirement, and on Maundy Thursday is reconciled by the bishop, who prays for the forgiveness of his sin. The old system of *exomologesis* has been reduced to a private discipline of forty days.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

By A.D. 600, all sins are held to be remissible after penance, through the laying on of hands by the bishop or by prayer. The sinner is not bound to seek forgiveness in this one way ; there are other ways open to him, such as forgiveness of others, almsgiving, charity, and confession to God. Absolution is not given by a verbal declaration. Only God can forgive sins ; the bishop is only the minister of forgiveness who welcomes the penitent at the end of his penance.

The Church from apostolic days had taught that baptism gave forgiveness of all past sins. But what about mortal sins committed after baptism ? This was a great problem which agitated the Church for five centuries, and in the agitation raised other problems. Were there sins which were unforgivable on earth ? For over two hundred years the Church believed that three sins in particular, namely, apostasy, adultery, and murder, were beyond forgiveness in this life. This theory was dropped in time.

Again, owing to the influence of *Hermas*, the Church generally held that only one opportunity of repentance was to be allowed after baptism to those guilty of mortal sins. This limitation of repentance to one chance had dire effects, for penitents dreaded the publicity and the shame involved in public penance of a severe kind.

Public penitence was the prevailing note for many centuries. The cessation of persecution early in the fourth century enabled Christians to cast out the fear engendered by such rigorism. Discipline weakened with the peace which came on the Church. Bishops tried many ways to meet the new situation. Grades of penitents were tried, but this was given up. Penance was made easy, and limited to the forty days of Lent. Private confessions were advised, for they removed the danger of publicity. Penitentiary priests were appointed to deal with sinners, but they did not possess the power to reconcile except in emergency.

One great principle of absolution, however, was never lost sight of during these six centuries. God alone forgave sins. The power to retain and remit sins was not interpreted to mean the power of saying, "I absolve thee from all thine offences," but the power to refuse or to grant admission to the Eucharist and to fellowship with the community.

During the Middle Ages a fresh attempt was made to bring home the necessity of penitential discipline, but it was an outrageous attempt. It was through the idea of compensation. The Penitential books supplied a scale, and the sinner was told in advance how much his sin would cost him if he were caught or if he confessed. Pope Gregory the Great (A.D. 590-604) supported the idea. True repentance consisted of conversion, confession, and compensation. Without compensation no sinner could plead the merits of Christ's death. Compensation was primary, absolution was secondary.

Private confessions to priests continued to be urged as an alternative to confessions to God. The Council of Chalons in A.D. 813 admits the diversity of views on

confession. Each kind of confession has its points. "Only let us see that we confess our sins to God who forgives our sins . . . and that we confess our sins to one another and pray for one another that we may be healed." The Council draws a careful distinction between confession to God and confession to priests: "Confession to God purges away sins, confession to the priest shows us in what manner sins are purged." The rule in the ninth century was that normally the bishops reconciled and gave absolution by prayer; the priest only acted in emergency (Council of Pavia). An annual confession to a priest was made compulsory for the Roman Church in 1215, and Thomas Aquinas in the same century laid down the doctrine of penitence which the Roman Church has in the main ever since accepted. Penitence, now a sacrament and necessary for forgiveness of post-baptismal sin, has three divisions: (1) Contrition, which is a disposition moved by love and is not to be confounded with attrition, which is moved by fear. (2) Confession to a priest of all known sins; the priest alone can give absolution. (3) Satisfaction, which follows absolution and which restores the penitent to a state of grace. The sacrament may be administered as often as it is needed. Thus began the sacramental view of absolution; the acts performed by the priest are the "matter" of the sacrament, the words, "I absolve thee," pronounced by the priest are "the form." Hitherto the form of absolution had been precatory; from the twelfth century it has been judicial. The priest who in the past had heard confessions, advised, and prayed with the penitent, now becomes the giver of forgiveness. The Council of Trent in 1551 declared that the absolution of the priest was a judicial act.

APPENDIX

THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE CHURCH AND FORGIVING-NESS.

FORGIVING-NESS is the fundamental and precedent condition of God's forgiveness. Another condition is repentance.

It is the glory of the Church of England that she has not forgotten the primary condition. The Exhortation in the Communion Office of the Book of Common Prayer uses very pertinent language in this matter. After referring to the need of confessing to God all past offences with full purpose of amendment, it continues thus : " And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbours ; then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them ; being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other ; and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand." The Prayer Book of 1549 added these words : " For neither the absolution of the priest can anything avail them, nor the receiving of this holy sacrament doth anything but increase their damnation."

So also in the Visitation of the Sick. " Then shall the Minister examine whether he repent him truly of his sins, and be in charity with all the world ; exhorting

him to forgive from the bottom of his heart all persons that have offended him ; and if he hath offended any other, to ask them forgiveness ; and where he hath done injury or wrong to any man, that he make amends to the uttermost of his power."

In the Catechism, it is required of those who partake of the Lord's Supper that they "examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life ; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death ; and be in charity with all men."

The teaching of the Catechism is repeated in the Invitation to them that come to receive the Holy Communion. "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life," etc.

From these quotations it is clear that, by implication, repentance is differentiated from forgiving-ness and charity with all men. The teaching of the Book of Common Prayer is justification for our assumption that repentance is held to be only one of the conditions for forgiveness and that readiness to forgive others is required as a second condition.

PRIVATE CONFESSION.

The methods by which forgiveness may be obtained may be grouped in two classes : Those by which the individual seeks forgiveness direct from God, such as confession, public or private, with repentance and prayer, and those which the Church has set forward as means of grace.

The methods of the early Church were Baptism for

pre-baptismal sin, and the Lord's Supper, Confession to one another with prayer, Repentance, and penitential discipline for sins committed after baptism. The later Church in dealing with post-baptismal sin tried various methods in its system of discipline, such as one repentance and public *exomologesis* which included public confession. But these rigorist methods were given up in time. Gradually private confession with absolution was tried, and in the thirteenth century it was adopted in the Latin Church. With it came the theory of sacramental absolution and the growth of the Sacrament of Penance.

Confession may be either public or private. Public confession by its very nature can only be in general terms, such as "we have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word, and deed, through our fault, through our own fault, through our own great fault; therefore we pray God to have mercy upon us." Or as in the daily offices of the Book of Common Prayer, and in Holy Communion.

Private confession can be detailed. It may be made to a priest or to a friend, "one to another" to use the phrase of St. James. Many prefer to go to a doctor rather than to a priest, to confess a sin. This is not against the teaching of the New Testament, and it has its advantages, for a doctor may have a wider experience of dealing with certain sins than is possessed by a priest, and in particular an unmarried priest. But this raises a big problem in the training of doctors. Are they equipped for the task? They are, we know, taught how to baptize, but are they taught how to give ghostly counsel and advice? Should there not be a closer *liaison* between physicians of the body and those of the soul? We can only repeat the advice of Origen on the

choice of confessors : “ Approve the physician to whom thou shouldest expose the cause of thy malady.” An individual is at liberty to choose the physician who is to minister to his soul.

No Church can compel its members to accept the principle of private confession to a priest. Private confession to be valuable must be voluntary. It is not forbidden. No priest can refuse to act as Confessor. Any priest may preach and teach the benefits of private confession, but no priest of the Church of England has any authority to order it as a regular rule of life or to lay it down as a condition precedent to Confirmation or Communion.

The Prayer Book of 1549 included useful passages on this matter of private confession, and we shall do well to hearken to its charitable view. After speaking of the invitation to go to the parish priest or to some other discreet and learned priest (altered in our present Prayer Book to “some other discreet and learned Minister of God’s Word”), it continued : “ requiring such as shall be satisfied with a general confession, not to be offended with them that do use, to their further satisfying, the auricular and secret confession to the priest : nor those also which think needful or convenient, for the quietness of their own conscience, particularly to open their sins to the priest, to be offended with them that are satisfied, with their humble confession to God, and the general confession of the Church. But in all things to follow and keep the rule of charity, and every man to be satisfied with his own conscience, not judging other men’s minds or consciences ; whereas he hath no warrant of God’s word to the same.”

We urge that in private confession every confessor

should teach every penitent that he is bound to carry out the primary condition of forgiveness before he can receive the forgiveness of God. May we use the language of the 1549 Prayer Book and say, that unless this condition is fulfilled, "the absolution of the priest can avail nothing"? If our Lord's corollary to His Prayer means anything, the absolution of the priest is of no avail if the penitent has not forgiven every one who has wronged him.

ABSOLUTION.

Has a priest the power to forgive sins against God? The answer of the Church for twelve centuries was that God only could forgive sins. Absolution by a form of words was not the law of any Church. No stress was laid on it even by such great men of the Church as Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, and Anselm. No evidence is forthcoming that for over a thousand years it was customary to forgive the lapsed by absolution pronounced in a judicial form of words; the form, when used, was precatory. During these centuries, absolution, however effected, was the duty of the bishop; in cases of extreme urgency, the right could be exercised by a priest with the approval of the bishop. The duty of the priest was only to hear confession, to advise, and to judge whether the penance was sufficient. The chief methods of absolution were the laying on of hands and admission to the Sacrament of Holy Communion; in later years absolution acted automatically when the period of penance expired.

Thus for twelve centuries after Jesus spoke the words giving the Church the power to retain and remit sins, there was no general understanding that either

bishop or priest had the power to “forgive” or “retain” sins.

Up to the seventh century, only in the ordination of bishops was there a mention of the retaining and remitting of sins. This was in a prayer that God would grant them the power to do so. There was no such prayer in the ordination of priests. Until the twelfth century the power was in the precatory and not in the imperative form. But, since Aquinas taught sacramental absolution, it has been held by the Latin Church and by some members of the Church of England that the priest has the power to say judicially, “*Ego te absolvo*”—words which are the “*virtus clavium et totum Sacramenti effectum*.” Also that, as our Lord made no mention of the Blessed Trinity when He instituted the sacrament of Penance (John xx. 21–23), the words, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” are not of the essence of the “form,” but that they should always be used. The Sacrament of Penance, according to the Latin Church and to others who accept its teaching, “is the divinely-appointed means by which Christians who have fallen into mortal sin after baptism receive forgiveness.” Further, “Those persons who only fall into venial sin are not under any *obligation* to go to confession.”

We have disagreed with this interpretation of the commission bestowed by our Lord and of the division of sins into “mortal” and “venial.” We have argued that neither the one nor the other has any warrant in Scripture, and there we must leave it.

Let us consider the teaching of the Church of England on this matter of absolution.

Absolution may be given in two forms—private or

public. Does the Church of England favour the Roman judicial view in the private form of the Visitation of the Sick by the use of the words, "I absolve thee from all thy sins," with or without the addition of the words "In the name of," etc. ?

The public form can be subdivided into declaratory and precatory. The declaratory form is used in the Order of Morning and Evening Prayer. "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel, wherefore let us beseech Him. . . ." The precatory form is used in Holy Communion. "Almighty God, our heavenly Father . . . have mercy upon you ; pardon and deliver you from all your sins." The latter is in the form of a prayer, but more personal ; we find not "all them that truly repent," but "you." The word "I" is not used by the Bishop or priest, as the case may be. The form of absolution states that it is God who has mercy, who pardons and delivers.

The only instance of the use of the first personal pronoun by the priest is in the private Visitation of the Sick. The sick person, after an exhortation to repent and to forgive (page 262), is to "be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences: And by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, IN the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

These words are to be used only for those who are ill in body. No guidance is given that they are to be always used, and in fact such words are not used even in the Eucharist. Further, the sick person is first exhorted to repent and to forgive. This is important, for if the conditions of forgiveness are fulfilled, the sick person or any healthy person can obtain forgiveness direct from God. No priest is needed to give him absolution. Lastly, the priest is to use the words of the Office only *if* the sick person humbly and heartily desire it. This is an "if," which limits the use of the words. The "if" clearly implies that the words of absolution are not necessary or imperative. The mere verbal assurance of the priest would suffice; but if the sick person desires to hear the priest give him this assurance in a set form of words he may do so.

Thus the use of the form of absolution in the special case of the Visitation of the Sick is hedged round and so limited that it cannot be judicial. The sick person is to repent and to forgive, then to confess, and then to ask for the form of words; he is not compelled to receive the form of absolution, and the priest is to use it only by invitation.

Moreover, the forgiveness is an assured fact before the priest uses the words, "I absolve thee from all thy sins." The priest repeats what has already been effected by the penitent's own fulfilling of the conditions and by his own prayer or with the prayer of the priest.

The following words of the late Dr. Swete are worth consideration: "The Church of England in retaining the mediæval form has certainly not accepted with it the mediæval theory that this form alone conveys to the penitent the grace of absolution. She intends her

members to take to themselves the comfortable sense of God's forgiveness as they listen to the intercessory absolution which precedes communion, and the declaratory absolution which precedes 'Our Father' at morning and evening prayer. The form provided for private ministrations (in the Visitation of the Sick) is especially impressive ; it is direct and personal, as the occasion requires ; but it has no exclusive claim to fulfil the Lord's commission to the Church to forgive sins in His name " (*The Forgiveness of Sins*, p 171).

Thus the Church of England holds that sacramental absolution gives no fuller absolution than is given in other ways. It is not more efficacious than the public absolution with its declarations of the conditions of forgiveness given in an office of the Church. It is in this sense, then, that the words used in the Ordering of Priests are to be understood. The Prayer Book is the commentary of the Ordinal.

The priest, therefore, is the herald, not the giver, of forgiveness. He proclaims that forgiveness is available, and that God alone can grant forgiveness on conditions laid down by Him. That a priest has the power to absolve is the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, but it is not the teaching of Christ, nor of the Apostles, nor of the Fathers who were in close fellowship with the Apostles, nor of the Church for twelve centuries, nor of the Church of England.

PART II

A RATIONALE OF FORGIVENESS

CHAPTER XII

HUMAN FORGIVENESS AND REPENTANCE

BEFORE we consider the respective claims of forgiving-ness and repentance to primacy, the bare constituents of each, as defined in the Gospels and in Moral Theology, may be stated and compared.

In the Prodigal Son, Repentance consists of six parts :

- The consciousness of sin ;
- An act of will ;
- A confession of sin ;
- Self-abasement ;
- Amendment ;
- Willingness to bear penalty.

Of these components, the first two refer to the inward disposition of the penitent and form the penitence. The disposition of mind and will precedes the act of repentance. It is to be noted that there is no room in it for forgiving-ness.

Human forgiveness or forgiving-ness in the Gospels has two sides :

- On the positive side, it is unconditional ;
 - it is active to win the offender ;
 - it is unlimited ;
 - it seeks the highest good of the offender ;
 - it forgets.

On the negative side, there is no desire for revenge ;
no retaliation ;
no regard for one's own
interests ;
no sense of offended
dignity ;
no condescension.

The forgiver is motivated by love for man and by love for God. He aims to love man with a love like that of God.

In Moral Theology, Repentance consists of three parts :

Confession of sin to God or man ;
Reparation to the injured ;
Amendment of life definitely expressed in a
purpose.

The disposition or penitence required for an act of repentance is the right emotion not only about sin, but also about God. It may be aroused by various causes, such as shame, remorse, fear, etc.

Penitence consists of a sense of sin due to some
experience ;
the feeling or emotion of
sorrow ;
the desire to amend.

The basic motive for Repentance is the love of God and not mere self-pity. The sinner should strive to love what God loves, and to hate what He hates.

One very noticeable difference between forgiving-ness and repentance is in the determining cause of action. In repentance it is the love of God, whilst in forgiving-ness it is the love of God and the love of man.

The primacy attached to forgiving-ness implies that

the forgiveness of those who trespass against us is a condition precedent to forgiveness from God. It must exist with the penitence of the sinner before his confession; it is not enough that the penitent should be willing to forgive after confession.

If, however, in penitence, the penitent is one who lives in the spirit of forgiving-ness, then and then only does repentance suffice. Repentance now is ideal and complete and true. But this is not the generally accepted meaning of repentance in Moral Theology, or in Manuals of Confession, or in the Church of England, or in Aquinas. It is not so understood in the Old Testament teaching on repentance or in its improved form in the Prodigal Son. For example, in the Prayer Book of the Church of England, repentance and the forgiveness of others are required as two distinct and separate conditions in the Exhortation and Invitation of the Communion Office, in the Catechism, and in the Visitation of the Sick (page 263 ff.).

Our assumption that forgiving-ness is not generally held to be a component of repentance seems therefore well founded.

Our review of Christ's teaching will have shown that He laid it down with exceptional emphasis that forgiving-ness was the primary and an indispensable condition of divine forgiveness. Repentance without forgiving-ness was insufficient. So also forgiving-ness without repentance was insufficient. His emphasis on human forgiveness was new teaching and revolutionary. Repentance must include love of God *and* love of man.

The logion of Jesus is of universal application. Forgiveness was to be extended not only to Jews, not only to Christians, whether in the early Church or out of it,

but to all, even enemies. The Christian in the new Israel of God must set a new standard for Jew and Gentile by loving both God and his neighbour (page 285 ff.). Jesus, as the greatest of Teachers, led men from step to step ever onwards. The Jew outside the kingdom was taught what godward repentance was and implied. The Jew within the kingdom was taught that there was something more required from him to gain God's forgiveness. God, as we know, in days past, forgave Israel on repentance, but in the new Israel God will not forgive on repentance only. In the new Israel the Jew and the Christian must love God, love his brother, and also love his enemy (Matt. v. 43).

Let us now consider the question of the primacy of forgiving-ness on which we have laid stress. In what way does forgiving-ness differ from repentance? Do the differences justify the primacy given to forgiving-ness? Are the differences valuable and important enough to convince us that Christ's logion, the corollary to the Lord's Prayer, means that repentance without human forgiveness is void and unworthy of the name?

The first argument for the necessity of the forgiving spirit in the penitent before he makes confession is that in no other way can a sinner prove himself worthily prepared and ready for God's forgiveness. A man who is not at peace with his brethren cannot be at peace with God and thus be fit to receive the peace which God's forgiveness brings. Love is the very essential nature of God, so much so that we say that God is Love. It is His nature and property therefore to forgive, for forgiveness is an aspect of love. If, then, an unforgiving but repentant man comes into His Presence he comes without the required fitness, like a man without a wedding garment.

God cannot from His very nature bestow a gift on a penitent who is not right with Him through being at strife with any of His children. God's spirit of love automatically recoils from a non-loving human spirit. God's love is like the sun which shines on the just and on the unjust, and the penitent who comes with non-forgiving-ness in his heart is as one who has raised a barrier to stop the rays of the sun reaching him. Forgiveness cannot be experienced by a man who has not the forgiving spirit when he confesses and repents.

If God is to show His love by forgiving, He expects to find in the penitent this very same love, however poor it may be in comparison with the love of God. Such a penitent is in the right condition to receive the gift, for God sees in him the manifestation of His own character. Because God loves all men, the penitent should be at pains to love all men and so be as perfect as his heavenly Father.

Secondly, God is antagonistic to any form of selfishness and self-centredness. His love, being unalloyed unselfishness, reacts against selfishness. Love and not repentance is characteristic of God. In repentance, the penitent confesses what he has done wrong, not what others have done to him. Thus, when he thinks of his fellow-men, it is only of those he has offended and not of those who have offended him. His main concern is his own wrong-doing, and he might all the time be feeling resentment against those who had wronged him. But if the forgiving spirit is in him before he repents or when he repents, thoughts of self are given the last place. Regard is paid to the highest interests of those who have wronged us before we consider the wrongs done us by others. All fear of selfishness is removed.

Thirdly, the forgiving life is the ideal Christian life. Acts of "forgiveness" are shown by others than Christians, by non-Christians, and even by the uncivilised. They are not the prerogative of any one race. But forgiving-ness, as Jesus taught us, is peculiarly Christian, and is essentially of a self-sacrificing nature and ever links our love for God with that of man ; it maintains the spiritual glow ; it is the life of union with God and with man ; it is the union of a trinity ; God, the offender, and the offended are one. A forgiving man, being self-sacrificing, is ever ready to confess and repent ; a repentant man is not always ready to forgive.

Fourthly, it is often harder to forgive than to repent, for we have to control the sense of fear that our offer of our friendship may be refused or misunderstood. To forgive makes greater claims on our spiritual energy than repentance does, for, even if repulsed, the offended man has to heap coals of fire on the offender's head, show unlimited forbearance, be active to win him to grace, and be always regardful of the offender's interests.

Fifthly, Repentance and the disposition of penitence relate to acts done by us, but forgiving-ness to acts done against us. Thus in forgiving-ness there is not only a sense of sin through the wrong committed by others on us, but also an overpowering sense of love, kindness, and charity, irrespective of offences. Further, forgiving-ness covers a wider field than deliberate wrong-doing. It has to embrace forgiveness of those trivialities which jar on us, such as social habits of the ignorant, peculiar habits of behaviour which offend, disturbances of our own peace of mind, a shattering of the concentration required for close study, and so on. These unconscious wrong-doings must be forgiven, and every feeling of repugnance and

exasperation controlled. Forgiveness relates to conscious and unconscious acts by and from which one may suffer.

We cannot repent of wrongs committed against us, but we can forgive.

Hence, when forgiving-ness is present before or with penitence, the emotional content is wider than when penitence alone is the disposition of mind. This is more clearly brought out by a psychological analysis.

Sixthly, psychology shows that whilst repentance is somewhat selfish, forgiving-ness is not. It may be seen as follows :

Penitence is the disposition or state of mind of him who repents. It is a mental process and can therefore be divided into the three parts of such a process. Cognition is the knowledge of sin or the conviction of sin, the affect or emotion is the contrition or sorrow for sin even though a feeling-tone may not be present, and the conation is the impulse to act which in a developed form is a desire to attain to righteousness. Penitence, then, is the attitude of mind of the penitent towards God. It is concerned only with the relation of the self to the Deity. There may, however, be in the conation a desire directed towards those who have wronged the penitent, but as a rule it is not so. Penitence exists, we may say, for the saving of the penitent's soul.

When we similarly resolve forgiving-ness, cognition is not the conviction or sense of sin, but love of one's neighbour, including offenders : the affect is not an emotion of sorrow or fear, but active sympathy and tender emotion for others : the conation is a desire to save, not one's own soul, but the souls of others.

We may conclude that, whilst the penitent is partially

self-centred, forgiving-ness is wholly unselfish in cognition, affect, and conation.

Thus psychology is an aid in our investigation. The elements of the mental process in forgiving-ness are seen not to be identical with those of repentance, except possibly in the conation. Jesus knew what was in man, and in making forgiving-ness the primary condition of forgiveness He was a Great Psychologist.

But we find further support from this modern science. According to McDougall, the most powerful of all the primary instincts of man is the parental instinct on which the existence of the human race and its welfare depend. Its effect is designated by him "tender emotion." "From this emotion and impulse to cherish spring generosity, gratitude, love, pity, true benevolence, and altruistic conduct of every kind" (*Social Psychology*, page 71). The bearing of this parental instinct on our discussion will be evident when we consider it alongside our Lord's teaching on forgiveness which He based on the thought of God as Father of a family. It is tender emotion from which springs every activity of forgiving-ness and which forbids every form of retaliation; it is tender emotion which makes one desire fellowship with an offender. The most powerful of all instincts, with its emotion towards generosity, does not operate in repentance but in forgiving-ness.

Seventhly, we live in a world of persons and not of things, and the God who gives forgiveness is He who longs to enter into personal relations with all His created children. The Incarnation teaches us that God manifested Himself through One who was truly human, and the manifestation came to us through men's intercourse with Jesus. The assurance of forgiveness comes to us

in the same way through fellowship which is inherently involved in forgiving-ness. Jesus showed us "that the way to God is not some separate way, apart from men, but that it is in and through one another, as it was through Him, that we come to God" (Grensted, *Psychology and God*, p. 249).

In this analysis of the differences between forgiving-ness and repentance, indications have been given to show why forgiving-ness may well be called primary. Let us reiterate in different form the argument for primacy.

The condition of forgiving-ness makes for the moral advancement of both the offender and the offended. It makes for the latter's advancement, for, as we have seen, he exercises self-control, restrains any impulses to injure the wrong-doer, overcomes evil with good, aims at reform, strives for peace. Self-interest has given way to the interests of the other. The offender on his part is given the opportunity to see the power and beauty of goodness, and has come within the influence of supernatural powers which may guide him into ways of peace.

The condition when carried out, makes the forgiver a continuous partaker in the nature of God, for he is preserving the union with Christ which was the greatest gift he received in baptism. God's love has found response in love, and the forgiver has proved himself *ipso facto* capable of receiving the gift of God's forgiveness. He has the spirit of the Incarnate Son in him. The Atonement has meaning for him. He has in some measure by his own self-sacrifice entered into the heart of the sacrificial love of God, and shown that he has realised that forgiveness from God is worth having and cannot be lightly had. He has learnt something of what his sin

cost God. The condition is not the disproof but the proof of the forgiver's attachment to Christ.

The condition is also a proof of the forgiver's appreciation of his sonship in the Church. He is in the new Israel, and not in the old, where the duty to his neighbour was not indissolubly united with his duty to God (page 285 ff.).

The condition laid down by Jesus was associated with the thought of God as Father. In the Lord's Prayer, God is "Our Father"; in the corollary to it He is "my Father." The analogy enables us to understand the condition in the light of family relationships. God as Father gives all His created children possibilities of enjoying His gifts in nature as well as His gifts of the spirit. His gift of forgiveness is conditional, because He as Father cannot forgive a son who is at enmity with his brother. Now in an earthly family, the father wishes to see the members of his family at one. A son who is at enmity with his brother cannot have the spirit of love in him, and by his own attitude renders himself incapable of receiving his father's forgiveness. Similarly, in the family of God, the Father cannot forgive an unforgiving son. A state of war in a family is not conducive to love. Forgiveness abolishes a state of war.

"God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of our brothers are not related as cause and effect, but rather as the obverse and reverse of one spiritual fact. They are in their own nature indissolubly united. It is not by an arbitrary decree that they are associated together; they are one thing. And here specially we have to remember that we are children before our Father. How can the Father take into affectionate intimacy with Himself two children who refuse to be on friendly terms with

one another ? He *can* only forgive us, as we forgive our brothers " (Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 265).

There are three further considerations which need mentioning.

There is a joy in forgiving ; an act of sacrificial love manifested in forgiving, when it is productive of good in the offender, brings such joy as is not otherwise experienced. There is often suffering in forgiving-ness, for love can be repulsed, but it is the pain of love borne hopefully, as is the love of a father or mother for an erring child. Faith, hope, and love, the three theological virtues, are present in forgiving-ness. On the other hand, there is danger in repentance without forgiving-ness ; we may become miserable sinners. Active sympathy with men is never a deterrent of sorrow for sin ; sorrow for sin may lead the sinner towards the avoidance of his fellow-men.

There is a danger of emotionalism in repentance which may end in morbid-ness ; religious mania can be the outcome of too great a self-introspection. Repentance may be the outcome of fear, but in forgiving-ness there is a conquest of fear. Forgiving-ness by its activity, for this it always is among fellow-men, is constructive and a definite check on any tendency to neurosis.

The third is the danger of repentance being mechanical, especially in compulsory repentance. But the danger is present even in ordinary confessions, which may become a ritual to be performed. Forgiving-ness cannot be mechanical, for it is an aspect of love ; it cannot be mechanical, for it is done of free will.

The arguments presented have done no more than bear witness to the wisdom of our Lord in making human forgiveness the fundamental and primary condition of forgiveness. We have tried to explore the differ-

ences which underlie the differentiation in order that we may understand the significance of our Lord's exceptional emphasis on one of the conditions of divine forgiveness and of a worthy and ideal repentance. His requirement applies as well to nations as to individuals.

The great need of the world to-day is the manifestation of the spirit of forgiveness. It is divided and rent asunder by national, ecclesiastical, and personal interests, so much so that whilst nations and parties and individuals all feel themselves offended, very rarely do they feel themselves offenders. The world longs for peace and nations long for security, but the spirit of forgiveness is not abroad. Christian nations have yet to learn that national sins cannot be forgiven by God unless nations forgive one another. What this forgiveness involves is now clear. The Atonement is Forgiveness in action, and the greatest practical test of Christianity is the manifestation of the spirit of forgiveness amongst all Christian nations. The world or a nation does not need a mission of repentance ; it needs a mission of forgiveness. The Church has erred in emphasising the call to repentance ; its primary duty is the preaching of the indispensable condition of the divine forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a more potent remedy for the ills of the world than repentance. No one can deny that both are operations of the Holy Spirit, but this does not mean that they are of equal value. Each helps the penitent to a new outlook, but that does not mean that one outlook is identical with the other. Each is a jewel, but all jewels are not of equal value.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DUTY OF FORGIVENESS

MARK has preserved an incident of deep import which he assigns to the week of our Lord's Passion. A scribe comes to Jesus and questions Him, "What commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answers with the opening words of the Shema, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind (and with all thy strength)." But He does not stop there. "The second is this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," words found not in the Shema, but in *Leviticus*. The scribe agrees that love for God and one's neighbour is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. This discreet answer brings from Jesus the commendation, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 28-34). Matthew tells us that a lawyer asks Jesus, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" that Jesus replies in the same words we find in Mark, and ends with the addition, "On these two commandments hangeth the whole law and the prophets" (xxii. 35-40). In the Lucan Gospel, an incident is placed on our Lord's journey to Jerusalem. A lawyer asks our Lord, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replies, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" Then the lawyer quotes the opening words of the Shema, and adds, "and thy neighbour as thyself." Then Jesus says, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (x. 25-28).

The legalist Pharisee and Jesus thus held identical views on the greatest commandment of the Law. The supremacy of the two commands, now united, was not held in doubt by the questioner and Jesus. They were both ardent Jews. Both worked for the Messianic kingdom, which to the former was still unrealised and to Jesus was already in existence. Both had the same ideal. So far they agreed, but they could walk together no farther, for they differed fundamentally on the application and meaning of the great commandment. The one was actuated by love for the Law, the Other by the law of Love. The one found a law of forgiveness for Israel only embedded in the Law (Lev. xix. 18), the other made forgiveness of all the essence of love for his neighbour. The one, trained in the Law, believed that repentance without the forgiving spirit was enough for forgiveness from God ; the Other taught that forgivingness was essential for divine forgiveness. Love for one's neighbour, the essence of which is forgiveness, was henceforth, through the reply of Jesus to the scribe, a duty as much as one's love to God. And, in His further teaching, forgivingness was set forth as the crucial test of love in the new Israel of God.

Jesus and the scribe embodied two religious systems which were in opposition. Ethical views on duty and ecclesiastical views on sonship were in conflict, and were soon to result in the separation of the Christian Church from the Jewish. Common action for the kingdom was impossible when diverse views were held on the meaning of "neighbour," when descent from Abraham was held to give exclusive rights and privileges which were denied to others, and when forgiveness of others was not recognised to make for righteousness. For as to sonship,

the chosen people believed that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of those who were in the line of descent from the patriarchs. God had not made of one blood all the nations of the earth. The history of Israel proved that in its various stages of growth, from the family and through the tribes and on to existence as a nation, Jehovah had particularly and solely concerned Himself with Israel. With Israel alone had He entered into a covenant, and this covenant defined the relation of Jew to Jew and of each to God ; its blessings were restricted to Israel. Then, as to the Law, it was their sole guide, inspired and unalterable. The code of laws regulated conduct and laid down necessary action for those who were bound by the Law. Towards those who stood outside the Law, there was no obligation laid on Israel. Hence, exclusiveness so controlled the Jewish spirit, that sinners like the publicans and moral degenerates were socially and religiously excommunicated for fear of defilement. But exclusiveness tended to self-centredness and self-satisfaction. This was particularly so when righteousness was attainable through mere observance of clearly defined laws. Lastly, as to love for his neighbour, the Jew showed it by refraining from wrong-doing ; to love was not to hate. The young man who kept the commandments, which dealt with his Israelite neighbour, was honest in his saying to Jesus, " Master, all these things have I observed from my youth." But when Jesus urged him to positive action, which was the one thing he lacked, " his countenance fell and he went away sorrowful " (Mark x. 17-22).

It was amongst a people, in the most influential part of whom self-righteousness was the hall-mark of

respectability, that Jesus preached His call to repentance. Quite clearly, a reformation must begin by a breaking down of the exclusiveness which prided itself on saying, "We have Abraham to our father," and of the ethical view which commanded a mere "Thou shalt not." Once these hindrances to spiritual attainment were removed, there was hope of constructive and positive development. The mass of the Jews hardened their hearts against reform, and so the Christian ideal had to take root on soil on which an ancient but a deadening and decadent conservatism had grown. What was this Christian ideal? What place did forgiveness hold in it?

The Christian ideal was based on the Jewish Shema, coupled with the command to love one's neighbour, but transformed by extending the word "neighbour" to include enemies, and by defining love both negatively and positively. The ideal was based therefore on love and not on law. It was to be lived out by a special community or Church, a new Israel of God, whose members were to claim to be not sons of Abraham, but sons of God.

First, as to the new Israel. The indispensable condition of admission to it was baptism, the original members having received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. From the very beginning of their new life in the Church the members were reminded that life was intimately associated with forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. Their baptism gave them remission of past sins and the gift of the Spirit, and the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood brought forgiveness of sins after baptism. To be members of this brotherhood implied obligations to God, to each other, and to enemies who were outside it. God was the Father of each member of the brotherhood by adoption, but He was also the Father of all mankind by

creation. The Church was to extend its influence to outsiders, for Christians were to be lights to the whole world, and to be the salt of the earth. All members were indissolubly bound by loyalty to a Personal God, and in Jesus they saw God.

The Church was therefore a league of the baptized which found its focus in the Messiah, soon to be recognized as God Incarnate ; because of this personal bond the Church would flourish.

Jesus clearly realised that no league of individuals or nations founded on a principle would survive, for an abstract principle cannot give enduring life.

In the Church there was a new sonship. Its members were sons of God and not sons of Abraham. The Church was universal and catholic. " For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free " (1 Cor. xii. 13). Into it may enter a Nicodemus, or a Zacchæus, or a Cornelius, or an Onesimus, or a Magdalene. Members of the Sanhedrin, publicans, Gentiles, slaves, and harlots may join the brotherhood. It was the duty of the Church to seek out the lost, as a shepherd his lost sheep or a woman her lost coin. All were alike slaves of Christ in whose service they were to find happiness and freedom. All were equal in this new Israel, equal in their rights and privileges ; the offender had his rights no less than the offended. The enemy outside the fold had his rights, as a man created in God's image, for the Father " maketh his sun to rise on the just and the unjust." Each Christian has duties therefore not only to God, not only to each other, but also to every human being. He was to be in the world but not of it. Unlike the legally-minded Jew, he was to show a friendly spirit towards the outcast, the publican, and the

sinner, though he was not to condone their sin or ignore its heinousness. Jesus Himself showed them the way. He was expected by the pious Jews to stand aloof from contact with social pariahs, but the Saviour of all saw the possibilities of good in all, forgave, and earned the title of the Friend of publicans and sinners. He saw that they were already punished by the world, and saw their greater need of sympathy and help.

Jesus was the Head of His Church. He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. His supremacy was absolute. No autocrat claimed more than He did. He required such complete self-surrender that He said, "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). And what were they to receive for this complete self-surrender? Not only a hundred-fold reward, but also persecutions (Mark x. 29, 30).

Self-surrender meant unbounding and unremitting zeal in service. The Christian must be aglow with zeal. If there was no zeal, or only a lukewarm zeal, he was fit for nothing but to be cast out on the dunghill. But zeal was not to be harmful. Christians were to be like "sheep in the midst of wolves" and as "harmless as doves." There was to be no retaliation and no strife, though they were to expect injuries and wrongs and trespasses. They were to rejoice when reviled and persecuted. To love their neighbours, including enemies, was self-sacrificing love. They were to love their neighbour as themselves; and as no man would injure himself, they were not to injure others.

Is this an impossible standard? It is not unknown in parenthood, and particularly in motherhood. It is not

unknown in patriotism when men have left homes, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and wives and children, and valued not their lives even unto death.

In this new Israel, there were no laws but only a few commands. One new command was "Love one another"; another was "love your enemies." There was to be no *Lex Talionis*, no equal return for injuries, and more, no retaliation of any kind: "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." The command to love meant more than the refraining from harm; the member of the brotherhood must perform positive acts of kindness. There was even further action necessary. The impulse to injure others and thoughts of injury must be checked. A Christian was like a strong man armed who kept his palace in peace. There was to be no desire for self-display not only in praying, almsgiving, and fasting, but in all conduct. Jesus warned them of the danger of merely negative action, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these My brethren, ye did it not unto Me."

The commands of Christ demanded more than the Law. But He had no police and no army to enforce His commands, no penal code, and no power to crush opposition. In His kingdom, however, no such force was necessary, for He would judge, what the Law could not do, both the spiritual and moral acts of Christians, and also the absence of zeal comparable to a hidden talent or the oil-less lamp. His authority was Himself. He trusted in their loyalty and to their devotion and would pardon. But one sin was unpardonable, the sin of unforgiving-ness.

Any un-Christian act would call down His resentment. He was the mortal enemy of selfishness, for His love,

like that of His Father, was not sentimental. If the Jews prided themselves on their self-centredness, the Christians must on their selflessness. "Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 32, 33).

If brother quarrelled with brother, appeal was not to be made to a civil court. There quarrels over the law of inheritance or any disobedience to the laws of purity could be judged. But quarrels between brothers were to be settled by private reconciliation which should be begun by the offended party. In the last resort appeal was to be made to the community. If a brother repented, he was to be forgiven. If he did not repent, he was to be treated as a publican and a sinner—that is to say, he was to be excommunicated. This did not mean he was to be deprived of his rights to kindly and considerate treatment which might make him repent; he must be treated as Jesus, the Friend of publicans and sinners, treated them.

The new test of man's love for his neighbour, be he a brother or an enemy, was unlimited forgiveness. This test could only be binding on Christians, but it was not confined in its application to Christians only.

This brief outline of the Christian ideal will show that the thought of forgiveness, whether divine or human, was continually kept before the disciples. The Shema was concerned solely with man's love for God (Deut. vi. 4-9; xi. 13-21; Numb. xv. 37-41). It was repeated every morning and evening by the Jew. But Jesus was not satisfied with it. There was another which must accompany it. To love one's neighbour was no less a

Shema than to love God. Not only on the Jewish Shema but on the words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"; "hangeth all the law and the prophets." This addition of a sentence from *Leviticus* to those verses which were particularly sacred to the Jews enlarged the whole outlook of the Christian. Love for God cannot now be separated from man's love for man. Repentance implies an acceptance of both. Forgiveness is an aspect of love, and therefore God's forgiveness cannot be separated from man's forgiveness of others, the just and the unjust, the bond and the free, the friend and the foe, the evil and the good. To them all the Christian was under an obligation. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 46, 48).

Thus, starting with the love of God the Father for all His sons, making baptism for the remission of sins the condition for membership of His Church, teaching love for God and for one's neighbour as the ideal of the Christian life, impressing on the baptized that obedience to His call meant whole-hearted renunciation of personal interests and complete self-surrender to Himself and in that self-surrender forgiving others, Jesus set forth His Christian ideal. Forgiving-ness was the supreme test of the fulfilment of the great commandment; it was a peculiarly Christian test and it was revolutionary.

CHAPTER XIV

ETHICS AND FORGIVENESS

OBJECTIONS TO THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

THAT a man should seek forgiveness or at least make an apology for wrongs which he has committed is generally allowed, if not expected. But ethical objections are raised when the initiative is with others who commit the offence. Why should the offended person act as if no wrong was done to him? Why should he forgive seventy times seven, or thrice, or at all? A clear distinction is thus drawn between wrongs done by a man, and wrongs done against a man.

Further, it is argued that it is impossible to obey a command to love one's neighbour. Jesus did not love the hypocrites; He warned His disciples against them. Besides, it is unmanly not to retaliate; to fight is instinctive.

Again, if the forgiveness of God is unlimited, and ours should be like His, why does He punish even when we have forgiven others and truly repented?

These objections and criticisms may be stated as follows:

1. It is impossible to love men in obedience to a command. That will not be love but hypocrisy. Also men are not always lovable.
2. It is ethically wrong to forgive in all cases. It may be actually injurious to the wrong-doer's character. Also, men are not always forgivable.

3. God has given us instincts and, therefore, if a man resents an injury, he cannot be accused of being unethical or unmoral.
4. If a sinner repents, God should not punish him. Forgiveness should be followed by remission of penalty.

TO LOVE TO ORDER IS HYPOCRISY.

It is impossible for a man to love in response to a command, irrespective of wrongs. All men are not lovable. Christianity is asking its followers to carry out what is impossible.

It is admittedly impossible to love, as lovers do, to order. We cannot compel ourselves to love others any more than we can buy love or bargain for it. Yet, there is a kind of love which is possible for all men in all circumstances. We may not be able to love all men with the love we show for husband or wife or children, but we can in every case refrain from wrong-doing and show kindness and forbearance to those who offend. We can love by not hating and by seeing the possibilities of good in the offender, and by making allowances for him and by doing good. This demands self-control on our part, but it is not unmanly to be master of our passions and not a slave to them. On merely ethical grounds a man's duty is at least to aim at the other's good—that is, to possess a forgiving spirit.

But the command to love and to forgive is a command laid on Christians. And no Christian can be governed exclusively by selfish considerations, or by intellectual argument. In any life of fellowship there must be room for the emotional element in man, which appeals to the heart rather than the head. This is the standpoint of

the Christian religion. Christianity, according to our Lord's teaching and not according to any popular perversion of it, is an appeal to the heart as well as to the head. Christianity demands the control of our desires, our impulses, and our thoughts. Christianity deals not with abstractions, but with personalities, deals not so much with arguments to discover right action and truth, but with enunciations of truth made by Him who claimed to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Christianity, indeed, gives us a reason why we should love all men. It is because of God's love for us. We love Him because He first loved us—that is, not only the just man but the unjust man, not only the good man, but also the evil man. To return good for evil in forgiveness is divine and is love.

Further, to love all men does not mean that we support the evil that is in men or that we ignore their evil actions. That is not love, as love should be defined. In ideal human love, which is that of a family, a parent loves a child, but does not approve the evil he might manifest. Also, to love all men does not mean that they should not be punished on just grounds with a view to their moral improvement.

“All men are not lovable.” There are varied qualities in men, some of which attract whilst others create disgust. It may be that aversion is created by class prejudice, by suspicion, by a sense of superiority, by racial differences, by a difference of colour or by political differences. The duty of Christian men is that they should remove the causes of aversion and check them when they arise. It can be done, for the Roman patrician proved it when he married a plebian bride, and Jesus proved it when He befriended a sinful woman, and missionaries prove it when they go to the lepers. The conquest of aversion

is through the recognition of the possibilities of good that exist in the most hardened criminal. In our world, and it is a world of beings, each individual, be he lovable or no, has his rights to the full expression of the best in him. The unlovable man has claims on us as he had on Jesus. Aversion and resentment work in inverse proportion to charity. The greater the charity, the less the resentment and the aversion.

IT IS IMMORAL TO FORGIVE.

The problem here is not whether God's righteousness might not be endangered by His free forgiveness, but whether human forgiveness freely given may not be harmful to the offender. Is it always practical wisdom to forgive? May it not lead in many cases to the deterioration of the wrong-doer's character? Further, men are not always forgivable.

Certainly it is immoral if forgiveness is defined as indifference to sin or ignoring of sin. This is so ethically, for such action is injurious to the offender and the offended; to the offender because he is encouraged to continue in wrong-doing, to the offended because his character suffers through wilful blindness to the presence of evil. But if forgiveness means that the offended person does not take a light view of the offence and, in spite of injury to himself, desires and works for the good of the offender, then the offended person gains morally because it costs him much. The offender also will learn something from the other's forbearance and active manifestation of good will. There is no human being, however depraved, who has not some soul of goodness in him "would men observingly distil it out." So Shakespeare thought, and so philosophers think. The influence of a

forgiving spirit is never wholly lost. Even outcasts like the publicans and sinners and the thief on the Cross were converted by the influence of Jesus.

The case of Zacchæus is of interest (Luke xix. 1-10). He belonged to one of the despised and excommunicated classes, who were held to be beyond redemption. His methods of money-making were open to objection. When Jesus visited Jericho, Zacchæus was as curious as any of its inhabitants to see the prophet of Galilee. To get a good glimpse of Him, the publican climbed a tree. Jesus therefore noticed him and, probably finding out his name and his profession by inquiry, offered Himself as a guest to him on that very day. It was a gracious act, for it went against popular prejudice, which found expression in murmuring and discontent. The result of this simple act of sympathy was that Zacchæus publicly announced his intention to right his wrongful acts of extortion and to give to the poor half of his goods. The courage of Jesus in showing friendliness to an outcast gained Him the outcast's heart.

Such results of good influence are not confined to Christianity, but are universal. The illustration, however, bears out our contention that forgiveness is not necessarily immoral, and that no Christian with Christ's own example before him can consider forgiveness to be in any way immoral. Even if men do think so, the growth of Christianity is dependent more on those who in all respects live in the spirit of Christ than on those who find it hard to forgive and forget. Christianity does not lay it down as a moral duty to forgive without repentance, but it is irreligious not to be forgiving in character and to be both ready to forgive and to do all that is in one's power for the offender's good.

To forgive others lifts us out of our self-centredness because it has saving power over the souls of the offended and offender. To forgive is love active in redemption. Forgiveness "is twice blessed : it blesseth him that gives and him that takes." To forgive may cause suffering in the forgiver for the unselfish offer might be scorned or ignored, but the love that seeks to redeem, delights in the sacrifice of love for love's sake. Scorned love, however, reveals God to the offender, and by the power of self-sacrifice may win the other to fellowship through the operation of the Spirit.

Why forgive an unrepentant man when it is his duty to seek forgiveness first ? Should he not make the first approach ? Christianity agrees with one aspect of this question. "If he repent, forgive him." But these words do not nullify kindness and forbearance without repentance, for Jesus did not say, "If he does not repent, forgive him not." He declared it a duty to forgive on repentance, but His attitude to the unrepentant was not one of hostility. He aimed and strove to call out their repentance. An old proverb quoted by St. Paul says, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him to drink." Such kindly acts might soften the heart of the offender. It will not be easy to re-admit a wrong-doer to our fellowship, but the Christian's duty is to strive to gain that end. Resentment and retaliation have no place in forgiving-ness. Evil must be overcome by good ; this is a divine line of action. "Forgiveness is a duty towards men which, almost more than any other duty, stamps those who realise and fulfil it best, with the distinctive seal of the Spirit of the Christ" (Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 48).

There are many, and in particular, men of the highest moral character who are imbued with the stern principle that forgiveness should be rarely exercised. Being honourable in their own conduct, they expect the same standard from others. What is morally wrong in a man of this stamp? His righteousness has obsessed him. He really believes that God is essentially moral and that love in Him is a minor thing. Feeling justified in himself because he believes God justifies his attitude, he would say to a wrong-doer, "You have made your bed, and you must lie on it," or he might quote scripture: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." He knows of God only as the personification of a moral code; he is unaware that God can re-create and make new, and that forgiveness is a re-creative force. He knows of Jesus, but not as One who came to call both the righteous and the sinner to repentance. He is blind to his own failure, and is ignorant that in his self-satisfaction there is great spiritual risk, for self-complacency is fundamentally irreligious.

There are also men who are perfectly satisfied with their own high moral code and honestly believe that they can do no wrong. They are righteous in their own esteem.

Self-complacency cannot be justified in the Christian religion. The transforming power of a vision of Jesus in His dealings with the righteous was apprehended by St. Paul. He, like many a Jew, at one time felt that he was a righteous man, a moral man. He was quite satisfied with the code of his society. He was very careful to observe its requirements, to fulfil its every demand. But when he was brought face to face with Jesus, all his complacency and self-satisfaction vanished. He learnt

that he was a sinner, and the chief of sinners. Not till he was pardoned by faith in Jesus did he find happiness and peace. Then he could write, "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1).

The spirit of the Pharisee who found occasion for a self-satisfied complacency is not the spirit of the Great Forgiver. The man who has, in his own judgment, committed no sin cannot know what sin is. He may be a religious man who, in his acts of worship, has publicly confessed with others that "we have erred, and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep," or before partaking of Christ's Body and Blood has confessed, "we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness . . . the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable." But the phrases have no meaning for him.

Or he may be amongst those whose only code is that of his group in society. Respectable sins are no sins to them. For there are various grades of society, and each grade has its moral code. There is, for example, a moral code among thieves; there is a moral code which looks lightly on adultery and looks askance at cheating at cards. A man who lives by the code of his social group may feel he is a moral respectable man, even though men of other social groups may judge his moral code to be partly immoral. It is only when religion comes in that a man gets a new vision and realises that the code of his group may hold elements which are immoral.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXCUSE.

It is argued that for man to forgive others, always at any rate, is against nature. Thus pleads the man with

the "Irish temperament." Thus pleads the man who says that he cannot help being roused by anger, resentment, and hatred, and perhaps to blows. To him to retaliate is a manly thing. It is the Old Testament law of retaliation, the *Lex Talionis*, in modern garb, supported by an appeal to a modern science.

The argument is on such lines as the following. God has endowed man with certain instincts which are their inheritance, as real and efficacious as are our senses. These instincts must have free play; and just as the sex-instinct in man is pleaded as an excuse for sexual licence and free-love, so the instinct of pugnacity with anger as its emotion is pleaded as an excuse for non-forgiveness and as a justification for retaliation. Let us see how this instinct manifests itself and how far the excuse will go.

The instinct is universal. It is only aroused in personal relationships. Men do not retaliate on an impersonal source such as a branch or a stone which does them an injury, nor does an angry spirit arise in an accidental encounter. But when a person willingly injures or offends another, the instinct comes into play. In such personal reactions this instinct, immediately an offence is committed, awakens a desire to assert one's freedom to break down any hindrance to gain an end. It acts thus. In many instances of grave wrong-doing, the offended man shows this reaction in taut muscles, clenched fist, glaring eyes, beetling brow, and angry words. The tiger in the man has come to life. Or in combination with other emotions, the reaction may manifest itself in scorn when men throw up their head, throw out their chest, and turn their backs on the offender. Revenge, contempt, and loathing are other

manifestations of the instinct in conjunction with other instincts. Jealousy is also aroused by it, making forgiveness hard and life bitter. Resentment is also easily aroused by wrongs, real or fancied, done to one's family, one's school, one's political party, one's church. Or the instinct may be seen in a painful manifestation when we hear the reproachful cry, "How could you have done it?" The excuse, therefore, covers a whole gamut of emotions.

We admit the presence of this instinct and its manifestations; we admit that non-retaliation is often looked upon as cowardice, that by some it is held a disgrace to manhood not to give blow for blow and not to demand the Old Testament standard of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." We admit that, in the best of men, feelings of jealousy, resentment, contempt, loathing, anger, scorn, disgust, envy, and hatred are to be met with. But we do argue on our side that there is at least a higher purpose towards which the instinct of pugnacity may be guided than the desire to retaliate and to take revenge.

The instinct of pugnacity and the emotion of anger when controlled can be made a means of moral gain. If moral indignation is roused at the sight of cruelty and injustice, the wrongs done to children, animals, the poor, and the outcast could be righted and their lot alleviated. This was how Jesus made a useful ally of the instinct. Further, anger may be made a means of developing one's own self. A man may worthily be angry with himself for lack of control. From the religious standpoint, the greatest battle of life, is the battle that is being waged in one's own self. It is harder for a man to conquer himself than to conquer the world. The great Napoleon is a classical instance. We argue, therefore, that if it is said that the instinct of pugnacity with its

emotion of anger is God-given, the instinct and emotion being a gift of God should be worthily used.

We may further point out that those who plead that they cannot help themselves when they retaliate will, on the other hand, utilise this very instinct in conjunction with another, namely, the parental instinct with its tender emotion, in certain social improvements in which they take a pride. The combination of these instincts is the ultimate root of moral indignation and of the sense of justice and of all acts of beneficence towards the oppressed. The country can be roused to protest against an act of injustice, and can admire the impartial way our judges interpret the law of the land. The human conscience rebels against the iniquitous slave-traffic and the inhumanity of the slums. In all social progress men's actions are actuated by those two very instincts which can play a leading part in furthering a forgiving spirit. May we not therefore reply that men who can do works of mercy because of the possession of instincts can also be merciful to those who have closely touched their lives by offences committed against themselves? As anger and tender emotion might be turned by them to good purpose in the development of society and of the self, so also anger with tenderness, which is the main-spring of moral indignation and justice, might be turned into an agency for the salvation and betterment of those who trespass against them. To sublimate our instincts is nobler than to be in subjection to them.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT REMISSION OF PENALTY.

The identification of forgiveness either with the total or partial abandonment of punishment is far from uncommon in the popular mind, where the removal or

alleviation of suffering or penalty or pain is held to be forgiveness. It is popularly believed that if God forgives, He must not punish. It is no exaggeration to say that in practical life, this problem of the relationship of divine pardon and punishment is a matter of deep importance, for people seek to escape the consequences of sin than to escape sin itself.

The existence of this view may be traced to the thoughts of God which are suggested by many Old Testament stories. God is vengeful ; He is waiting His opportunity and will punish. The most that can be hoped for is a mitigation of the punishment. Such were the popular beliefs of the Mosaic age and the beliefs that Jeremiah and Ezekiel controverted, but they are the beliefs even of intelligent men and women of to-day. It is a curious phenomenon, but nevertheless true, that in the sphere of morals too, a large mass of men and women is more influenced by the teaching of the Old Testament than by that of the New.

Or again, the old idea of a written record kept in heaven, with which the thought of God as Judge is united, is fixed firmly in their minds. They read that " the judgment was set, and the books were opened " (Dan. vii. 10), or again that John the Divine wrote : " I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne ; and books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works " (Rev. xx. 12). Such language is impressive ; it haunts the mind and the imagination. But, even if symbolic only, we know that the idea of a written record and its implications have been destroyed by Jesus. Forgiveness means that any

kind of record has been obliterated from the mind of the Forgiver.

The assumption made by those whose knowledge of God and of His other dealings with men is drawn from Old Testament ideas, is that remission of punishment is equivalent to forgiveness. Such a one fails to realise that forbearance to punish can be immoral if it is shown without reasonable cause, merely on the whim of the forgiver or at the request of the wrong-doer. He considers forgiveness as a light thing. It might be said that Simon, for his treachery, was only punished by a look from Jesus, but in that single glance from the eyes of our Lord we see the justification for the remedial use of punishment. The look not only showed how Jesus felt the disloyalty of His disciple, but it brought on the disciple the punishment of great mental distress and agony, which is a very severe form of punishment and often more painful than physical pain. Forgiveness, by its very definition, is no trifling matter. No mere withholding of a penalty can be an index to its real meaning. We cannot say that the brilliance of a jewel is comparable to the appearance of a piece of glass.

Again, forgiveness is not a conscious ignoring of sin. It was in Old Testament days defined sometimes as a covering so that the sin might not be observed and be forgiven. That symbolic meaning has a real place in our Lord's view of forgiveness. But forgiveness does not treat the offender as if he had done no wrong. If it were so, we should get not forgiveness but the negation of forgiveness, for there would be nothing in the offender to forgive, and nothing for the offended to do. To think of forgiveness as the deliberate ignoring of sin and a blindness to evil is to mistake its meaning, for the

offender who so acts is harming both himself and the wrong-doer. He harms himself in that he looks on evil as good, and he harms the culprit by an act which makes for the latter's degeneracy. Forgiveness as a disregarding of sin is not a creative act, which forgiveness essentially is. The ignoring of sin is wholly negative in character; it is destructive of good, it is treating a disease as if it was no disease, but a sign of good health.

It is therefore necessary to insist that forgiveness is peculiarly and essentially a spiritual matter, and that the infliction of punishment does not necessarily mean that there is no forgiveness apart from it. A homely illustration will make this distinction clear. A father who is devoted to his son may punish him for the sole purpose of training the boy and correcting some fault or tendency in him, such as wilful disobedience. The punishment here is not revenge, nor is it actuated by hate, but is wholly remedial and disciplinary. The father punishes because he loves.

"Forgiveness" in a court of law may result in remission of punishment, but that is not forgiveness where God and His family are concerned. For forgiveness is the full restoration to the family, the question of penalty being quite a secondary matter. In fact, wherever forgiveness is given, the penalty is welcomed; the offender now desires it; the punishment ceases to be penal and becomes remedial.

God is not a judge but a Father. A judge cannot forgive though he can give the offender a benefit; a judge cannot restore an offender to society by remitting a penalty. But God deals with us as children; He wants His prodigal back, and longs that he should seek to return to the family circle. God's forgiveness is a full

and complete restoration to the family. God keeps no record when forgiveness is given.

Sin brings its own punishment, and this the sinner must bear. Natural laws work their effects ; diseases, ill-health, mental suffering, loss of money and shame—such are some of the penalties of sin. The prodigal son lost his inheritance and never got it back again ; all that the father possessed now was the property of the elder brother (Luke xv. 31) ; but the prodigal thought not of the money wasted but of the sorrow caused his father and of the forgiveness he desired ; the punishment, whatever it was, he was willing to bear.

Jesus, as far as we know, did not deal with the problem of sin and suffering and punishment. To Him it was more important that man should use suffering as well as punishment to his own spiritual advantage.

FORGIVENESS IS REMEDIAL.

1. Forgiveness therefore cannot be equated with remission of penalty. On the other hand, when a sinner is forgiven, his whole attitude to punishment should change, and that in three ways.

First, in regard to his inner life. He will have felt in himself a sense of shame and disgust which may not be wholly obliterated even after forgiveness. His memories and thoughts may constantly recall his evil past and his shameful acts. He may be frequently reproaching himself and saying, " Why did I do it ? " He will have felt and may continue to feel humiliated at his weakness and his failure to fight against the temptation which ended in his sinning. But there are other effects of forgiveness which materially modify a tendency to despondency. He knows that the forgiver has

offered his friendship in the fight against sin, and that the past has no influence in his dealings with the sinner. He perceives that forgiveness means that the shame and disgust and humiliation are now curative ; they are no longer stumbling-blocks or impediments to the continuation of the communion which has been restored, but they are stepping-stones towards a higher life.

Secondly, in regard to external circumstances, such as loss of health, imprisonment, and wasted opportunities, these are not the acts of a vengeful God but the fruits of sin. Forgiveness turns these punishments into means of grace and makes them sacramental. The sinner, having found peace and happiness in the restoration of friendship, in the knowledge of the forgiver's sympathy, in the assurance of his co-operation in renewal of life, welcomes the punishment. No longer is the penalty held to be destructive, it is now a means of healing. That is undoubtedly the experience of a man forgiven ; he wishes and desires punishment. If, then, a man desires and welcomes it, it is no longer punishment. He has no desire to escape the consequences of his sin. What has happened is that he realises that the forgiver, be he God or a human being, is now with him helping him in his work of regeneration. It is now a life in Christ. A new law has come into operation. Supernatural powers have begun to act. As St. Paul put it, " The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death " (Rom. viii. 2). Base metal has been transmuted into gold by the Divine Alchemist.

Lastly, in regard to the third party. What about the effect of the prodigal's sin on those who were his companions of shame ? The gravest punishment in-

flicted on the offender is not that of his memories and his humiliation, not that of external circumstances, but that of the knowledge of the evil which his own act has inflicted on the others. He realises this on forgiveness, if not before. He then knows that he has deliberately caused another to sin, and he wonders how forgiveness can do away with this terrible effect of his sin. If he has won restoration, the others have lost grievously through his act. What about them? Can the forgiven penitent be happy, whilst his partner in sin is unforgiven and still living in sin?

The problem is vital. The answer lies in the fact that a sharer in sin is as much responsible for his own sin as the leader of it. For example, a seduced woman is as responsible as the seducer. Individual responsibility cannot be disclaimed. In fact, acquiescence makes the person influenced to sin by the act of another the cause of sin in the person influencing. In the religious life, the law of action and reaction holds. If through a man's influence a woman is led to sin, the woman by reacting to the man's influence is responsible for his sin. The man tempted the woman, and the woman's consent has turned the temptation into sin. The reception of the man's influence is wholly the act of the woman; she is responsible for its reception. She could have saved the man from sin, but did not. An accessory to sin is a sinner in the first degree. She has sinned, as the man has, in the sight of God. The prodigal's confession applies to any of his companions as to himself, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son." The harlots and every man who helped in the prodigal's fall were offenders. They all offended not only God but also the prodigal.

It is for each of them to seek restoration to fellowship as the prodigal did. Forgiveness of others and repentance are as much their duty as the prodigal's.

THE GREAT REALITY.

It is clear, therefore, that in all moral problems of forgiveness we are driven back to the teaching of Jesus and His presentation of God as Righteous Love. God loves all men equally and impartially. He is not primarily the Giver of the Moral law and the Judge who punishes. He is supremely Love, and even the moral law, whether of the Jews or of any nation, or of any social body whereby justice is exercised in their respective spheres, must be interpreted by all Christians in the light of the peremptory law that we must love our neighbour, enemy though he be. Our world is a world of beings and of personalities, and our responsibility is towards One who is a Personal Being. The Great Reality is Love in action for good. His grace demands man's free response (page 117 ff.). Forgiving-ness is love in action, and is the highest human experience possible for man, for it is sharing in the nature of the Great Reality. In the partaking of God's nature by forgiving lies the main justification for our Lord's insistence of it as the primary and indispensable condition of being forgiven by God. The forgiven as well as the forgiver belong to God. They love God best who, knowing the value of His forgiveness, forgive others. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). In ourselves we are unworthy of His mercy, but in showing forgiving-ness to others we reveal something of the character of Him who desires us to be worthy of His forgiving. Because of our love for man through forgiving-ness, because of

our faith, and repentance, we can confidently ask that He should forgive us and be assured that He does. Because we love our brother, be he friend or foe, whom we see, we love God whom we cannot see.

“Now you may speculate on the Divine, dream of the Divine, aspire to the Divine, lose yourself in the Divine without ever raising the question of pardon, or even after having put it aside as unmeaning; but you can only ask for pardon if the Divine, ultimately, is a free, loving conscious spirit” (Mackintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*, p. 176).

Forgiving-ness is a peculiarly Christian duty in its meaning, its contents, its importance. And because forgiveness is intimately linked with our conception of God it finds expression in the Christian Creed. Also because this conception of God is that of the Father dealing with His family whose members should love both Him and one another, the petition for forgiveness with its pregnant condition finds its right place in our daily prayer to our Father. A forgiving spirit is the manifestation of the union with Christ which was effected in baptism.

CHAPTER XV

DIVINE FORGIVENESS

IT is an historical fact that Jesus was crucified and died on the Cross in the time of Pontius Pilate.

Christians have ever believed that our Lord's death meant everything to the world. What the Cross signified is summed up by St. Paul. "We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. v. 10); and again, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (2 Cor. v. 19). Or, as St. John puts it, Jesus "is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 2). We believe we were reconciled to God. What does this mean?

Between God and man, through the sins of men, there is set up a barrier. God is antagonistic to sin, but because of His love for sinners He sent His only Son to live and die for them, thereby proving to the world that He took the first step towards drawing men to Himself. He made the forgiveness of sins available for all through Christ's death on the Cross. He did His part in reconciling the world to Himself. But there are two parties in a reconciliation, and each has a share in the reconciliation. We must in our turn be reconciled to God (2 Cor. v. 20). It is for us to accept the offer made by God, the offer of forgiveness from Him. How are we to show our acceptance? By faith in Him, and a complete trust in His promise of forgiveness. This we must do of our

own free will. We believe that God in Christ forgives the sins of all who forgive others and truly repent.

THE ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS.

Because of our Lord's at-one-ment or reconciliation by His death on the Cross and by His life of constant reconciliation among men, we are assured of God's forgiveness. Our assurance finds expression in the Creed. I believe that there is "the forgiveness of sins." The assurance can be given in no other way than through faith. Every aid towards assurance which we may get elsewhere is ultimately dependent on faith in God's word and on the death and life of His Son.

A man who is not concerned about his sin, or anxious about it, will neither be interested in nor feel any need of forgiveness. Pardon is to him a matter of indifference. But many troubled souls and the broken-hearted and heavy-laden ask for personal assurance. They are not unlike many Christians who, whilst they believe that Jesus rose from the dead yet seek for personal assurance of survival through spiritualism.

This assurance can be given by those who speak from experience and are untroubled by doubts. Experience of forgiveness should precede the declaration of assurance. For as to be in love with love is not to love, and as to be assured what love is is only possible for those who do love and know what love is, so also to understand forgiveness and to assure others of forgiveness is only possible for those who have forgiven and have been forgiven. But he who gives this assurance can only do so through faith in Christ. Because of His word, he believes in the forgiveness of sins as a fact and not as a theory. No theories or conjectures can of themselves give assurance.

Thus ultimately we come to trust in Christ. We, because of Him, of His own character, His teaching, and His acts, accept the fact of forgiveness. How God forgives we know not. How He takes us back into fellowship and friendship, and makes forgiveness real, we know not. But we know that forgiveness is a reality, the greatest proof of the love of the great reality—Spirit in action for love. We believe that forgiveness is a free gift of God, given for no merit of ours. We are unworthy of the least and of the greatest of His mercies.

Jesus made "assurance doubly sure" by the kind of God He revealed to us. No First Cause, No Absolute, No Great Mathematician can give forgiveness. Only personal relationship can effect it, and God as revealed to us is a Personal God, One who enters into personal relations with men, Who loves them, cares for them, suffers with them, and guides them into all truth. He is a God who loves all men indiscriminately, who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust," a God "who never changes, whose love will never die." He is a God who is living and active and creative. He never breaks communion, never forsakes; it is by our own act that fellowship is ever broken or refused. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was tempted to think that God had broken this fellowship, and He fought it as if it were the greatest battle of His life on earth; there alone He was in agony, and "His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." Communion with a Personal, Living, Creative God was the greatest thing in the world to Him, as the restoration of this broken communion, that is forgiveness, should be the greatest thing in the world to us. Lastly, Jesus revealed

to us that God pours out His love in the spirit of perfect love, ungrudgingly, freely, and incessantly. In His love there is nothing discordant or unloving. His love is not a mere abstraction. He is Love.

But Jesus went further. He gave us a practical way of gaining this assurance. He gave us a condition which we can personally carry out. It is as if He said, "Fulfil a condition and you will be assured." Now, we cannot see the Divine Forgiver, but we live in a world of human beings, in a life of intercourse with other men. If we forgive the men whom we see, we shall through our experience gain the assurance of our being forgiven.

Jesus was one with His Father, and His fellowship with Him was never broken. He knew what fellowship and communion meant—that is, He knew what restoration to fellowship means without the experience of being restored. He forgave in order to tell men that this restoration was a jewel beyond price; it cannot be bought, but it can be found by those who seek it. The assurance of forgiveness is co-terminous with the act of forgiving. If we take Jesus at His word and forgive others, we gain that assurance through our faith in Him.

Assurance means that the past has ceased to be a nightmare. Can we undo the past? Can we undo a fact of history? In a sense we cannot do so, but we can turn from the past and look to the future. Forgiveness means that it is the offender's future that matters. The past is like a disease that has been healed, a sickness that has been cured, or a debt that has been cancelled. No ill effects are now felt, no evil influences now hold sway. The cure and the cancellation are in themselves assurances of forgiveness.

THE EXPERIENCE OF FORGIVENESS.

Forgiveness is a manifestation of love ; to forgive is the most far-reaching act of love, for it is creative. When we think of the love of God we think of love as infinitely holy, infinitely pure, infinitely tender, and infinitely patient. If, then, forgiveness is the greatest act of love we cannot possibly understand the fullest and deepest implications of God's forgiveness. Yet, since Jesus taught us that divine forgiveness and human forgiveness are analogous, and we desire to understand the infinite by the finite, we must consider the forgiveness not of a petty wrong but a terrible injury. Most men and women know the feelings aroused and the mental struggles which take place during and after a deadly injury done to them ; many know from experience what it costs to forgive. We attempt an analysis of this experience without claiming that we have fully probed into the emotions stirred up in it.

To forgive involves great mental conflict. The forgiver must fight down the desire to retaliate and to justify one's manhood, to get the last word in, to speak angry words, to expose the offender and to lower his pride. It is a fight against instinctive impulses. There may be, too, the pain of disillusionment in discovering ill where ill was not expected, and perhaps resentment for insult and for injury done to one's reputation, as in slander. Thus to forgive we must fight against thoughts, emotions, impulses, and desires to injure the offender.

But even after the victory has been won over self, experience teaches us how difficult it is to forget. The injury comes up in the memory whenever we meet the offender or talk of him, or it may come up unbidden.

We "forget" not in the sense that the hateful past has disappeared from our memory, but in the sense that our disposition towards the pardoned offender is directed for his good. We now always wish him well, and we think of him charitably. We make allowances, hoping that others will do the same for us. The offender is treated as a friend. We pray for him, and learn that prayer helps active sympathy. We realise that we have now peace of mind, for non-forgiving can magnify the offence, foster hatred, distort one's vision of the possibilities of good in all men, and generally have a baneful effect on one's spiritual life. Remembrance of an injury which has not been forgotten—that is to say, where there has not been a change of associated thoughts and desires—constitutes a deteriorating influence.

In forgiving, opposition is changed to sympathy. When the offence is committed, there is present in the offended one a desire to take sides in future and to argue against any one who presents a kinder view of the offender's character. The offender is judged and condemned. He was hateful once and therefore he must always be hateful to all. No allowances were made for "he ought to have known better." He was ungentlemanly, inconsiderate, and his behaviour was disgusting. When the offender is forgiven, all this hostility is changed. We feel sorry for him. We recognise we are no better, but worse than he. We know we have done to others what he has done to us. We cease to be indifferent to his welfare and his happiness. We put ourselves in his place, we give him the benefit of any doubt, we sympathise, and sympathise actively. For now we desire to help, hoping to share in his regeneration, hoping to contribute towards it. Sympathy develops friendship,

and we learn that it is reciprocated. Forgiveness without active sympathy is seen to be no forgiveness for it brings no happiness. Sympathy makes one desire the offender's companionship, makes one long for interchange of thoughts, makes one desire to serve the best interests of the offender. Active sympathy is protective and tender.

To forgive is a creative act. Destructive thoughts and criticisms give place to a living, active, and constructive interest. The restoration to friendship and fellowship has banished both antagonism and harmful remembrance from one's thoughts and feelings, and also a desire to retaliate and to revenge in one's external conduct. The nursing of a grievance has given way to a protective and re-creative aim.

Such is the experience of forgiving amongst human beings. We may sum it up by saying that forgiveness costs the offended much, is actively sympathetic, is creative. To forgive is to be a cross-bearer in the company of our Lord.

Let us now turn to the experience of being forgiven, which is as valuable as forgiving in estimating the meaning of forgiveness. We feel a sense of gratitude that the offended one has taken us back to fellowship ; we desire to show our gratitude by service and patient perpetual acts of kindness and love ; we cannot do enough. We are thankful to be thought worthy of being trusted, and we strive to prove ourselves worthy. We know we have been given a new start and new hope, and that the past is as if it had never been, that our failure will never be mentioned or brought up against us or thrown in our face. No resentment is shown us, no reproach is offered ; neither by look nor deed is there any evidence

of antagonism ; in fact, the forgiver and the forgiven manifest love more patently than before. We are conscious of having given happiness and being happy ourselves. We feel a sense of calmness and peace—we feel our great unworthiness and would bend the knee in thankful adoration. Our whole personality is now responsive to good influence ; we turn away from evil as a horrible thing. If punishment has to be borne, we accept it thankfully as being our just deserts. We welcome the penalty and would add to it. Our experience is no different from that of Simon on the lake or of him after his desertion of his Master and Friend. We feel that the burden has been lifted, and that the love and sympathy meted out has helped to alleviate it. We see ourselves as re-created beings ; joy and happiness are reflected in our lives and shine in our eyes.

To forgive and to be forgiven are precious experiences. To forgive is to restore another, to be forgiven is to be restored. To pardon a great wrong is an experience of the Cross, for it is vicarious suffering. It may help to avert a tragedy, to save from shipwreck. Forgiveness is the current coin of love ; to forgive a fellow-man is to tender the coin to God. He accepts it and transforms and transmutes it. The man who does not tender the current coin is bankrupt, and God, as Jesus taught us, will only transform and transmute that which is rendered to Him.

HUMAN FORGIVENESS AN INDEX OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

Forgiveness cannot be understood apart from personality. We cannot forgive a stone or a tree. We cannot experience forgiveness except from a personality,

certainly not from an abstraction or an Absolute. Forgiveness is not the restoration of fellowship with love or friendship, but with a lover and a friend. In forgiving, the forgiver identifies himself with the forgiven.

Again, this re-establishment of intimacy is vastly more than indifference or forbearance, or civility, or ignoring ; it is a vital, heartening, encouraging, healing, and re-creating activity ; it creates a new attitude and regenerates life and hope in the penitent.

If human forgiving-ness, as we tried to analyse it, is of such deep quality, we must assume that divine forgiveness is at least as deep and complete and unqualified. In our Lord's teaching in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant, the forgiveness of God is compared with its analogue, that given by man. In it divine pardon is represented as incomparable and infinite in scope and " dimensions " and value. The parable tells us that human forgiveness is analogous to the divine, but that human forgiveness is only a faint reflection of the immeasurable worth of forgiveness which God gives to man.

Assuming, then, that the pardon given by man is only an index of the pardon bestowed by God, let us try to gather up some of its constituent elements.

As human forgiveness finds its spring of action in love, the forgiveness of God is an outpouring of His love and grace. It cannot be bought or obtained by bargain.

As human forgiveness is a complete, unqualified re-establishment of intimate relationship, so is the forgiveness of God.

Because human forgiveness is that between persons, the love and forgiveness of God is personal too.

Our "forgetting" is, as we have seen, only relative, but God forgets absolutely. The past is wiped off effectually and is as if it had never been. He, the Lord of History, treats an historical act as if it had never been an act of history. The record is cancelled once for all, and every trace of it obliterated. We remember our sins that have been forgiven for our own benefit and good ; God forgets them of His infinite love for our good. The mind of God is beyond psychology, for He forgets completely.

As human forgiveness is creative and sympathetic, so must the divine forgiveness be. God is not only loving, but He is living, active, regenerative. His forgiveness makes us rise from our dead selves to higher things. He transforms a bad situation to such effect that a new life begins for the forgiven. He creates a new heart. We cannot explain how He does this, for this act is beyond physical laws ; we can with justification speak of it as supernatural. That was our Lord's view of it in the healing of the paralytic ; the critical onlookers saw it at once. In some way, God separates the sinner from his sin. It is only God who can do this.

As the depth and fullness of human forgiveness makes one wonder at such an outpouring of love from man, so God's love and forgiveness is "His doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." His love is amazing.

As human forgiveness is conditional, so is divine forgiveness. Man receives what God gives. He, the Giver, has made conditions for reception. Man being possessed of free will may choose to accept or refuse the conditional gift.

As in human forgiveness, there is a sacrifice of personal interests for the good of the offender—that is to say, the

forgiver has to bear a share of the sinner's suffering, so must God's forgiveness be. It must be an act of the purest and holiest love that is beyond conception, and it must be sacrificial love.

As in human forgiveness, even if there is a rebuke for the wrong-doing, and perhaps punishment for the sake of loving discipline, the forgiver sees the possibilities of good in the offender without condoning his sin, so it is with divine forgiveness. God looks to the future and not to the past.

FORGIVENESS, FELLOWSHIP, AND FRIENDSHIP.

Amongst the works of the Holy Spirit is the conviction of sin. "And He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement" (John xvi. 8). This passage may be read in conjunction with the closing words of St. Paul in one of his Epistles: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all" (2 Cor. xiii. 14). Conviction of sin and communion or fellowship are thus associated with the Holy Spirit. Now forgiveness is restoration of communion or fellowship with God and men after the barrier of sin has been destroyed. Man alone raises this barrier between God and himself. The destruction of this barrier, and the restoration of communion with God are then among the operations of the Holy Spirit, Who is leading men to all truth. We may think of those well-known words:

"Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou would'st do."

It is through the help of the Spirit that we can forgive as God forgives ; to forgive creates a new spirit in the forgiver and the forgiven, for we do what Jesus would have us do.

There is another word, which has been frequently used in this essay, which we shall find it worth while to consider. It is the word " friendship "—a word of deep significance in our Lord's life. " Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you " (John xv. 13 ff.). Has not the word " friend," applied to our Lord in scorn and derision, when the Pharisees noted His companionship with publicans and sinners, since its first use, also become an apt description of Him who loved to be with the outcast and the despised ? We may well use the term " friendship " in place of fellowship.

For what is friendship ? Let us turn to St. Paul's analysis and notice how much of what forgiveness means appears in it. The word " charity " sounds cold, and the word " love " too big in idea for that famous hymn he wrote. The nearest approach to the Greek word in the hymn is friendship, and it has been suggested that the hymn was written in sadness of heart for a broken friendship, broken by St. Paul's own fault (page 214). Let us read " friendship," therefore, in the hymn, and note its characteristics, whilst we recall the meaning of forgiveness.

" Friendship suffereth long, and is kind ; friendship envieth not ; friendship vaunteth not itself, is not puffed

up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil ; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

The same qualities are to be found in the dealings of Christ, as the Friend of publicans and sinners and as the Friend of the disciples, whom He kept with Him in fellowship that He might win them. As Friend, He knew what it was to be disappointed with their failures ; He knew their weaknesses, their ignorance, their waywardness, their dulness. But they found out that He could be trusted, that He was patient and forbearing, unselfish and long-suffering, so much so that a sinful woman thought nothing of spending her money on ointment for His head, and Simon Peter in one look of His Master saw the loving rebuke of an unselfish heart. The friendship Jesus desired was of a high order. What Jesus desired, God desires of us. We are to be like Him, and forgive as He forgives.

Friendship sounds so homely and so personal ; it has a sense of warmth and affection which is not so apparent in fellowship. It has an element of delight and welcome which captivates us. The thought of our friendships, of friendships preserved in absence, brings joy to our hearts and smiles to our faces. Love is not friendship, nor is friendship love. A child may love his father and mother, but may not look on them as his friends ; a man may love his wife, but she may not be his greatest friend. Is it because woman can understand better than man what love is, is it because woman cannot understand as well as man what friendship is, that the highest type of love is generally found in women and the finest

type of friendship in men ? Is this the reason why as a rule, women find it harder than men to forgive ?

Jesus had a genius for friendship. When He chose His disciples, it was " that they might be with Him." Friendship implies the closest of intimate fellowship. The finest epitaph given ever to one who is said to have lived in this intimate fellowship was that he was " a friend of God." So with us. Like St. Paul, we should long to " know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings " (Phil. iii. 10). If, then, Jesus calls us to forgive that we may be forgiven, it is because His friendship is worth having. To be a friend of the offender is to be a friend of God.

Forgiveness is wholly personal and wholly spiritual. The fellowship and friendship of God is a thing of priceless worth, and to possess it, God demands that we should share it with all, for He loves all. His forgiveness cannot be separated from human forgiveness, any more than His love for the offended can be separated from His love for the offender.

When, therefore, in the prayer to our Father, which Jesus taught His disciples, He laid down one condition in one petition, He showed his vision of a regenerated world. He pointed the way to happiness, and it was through Calvary. He showed how we can experience His redeeming love. To forgive is to be the friend of God, to forgive is to be the friend of the Friend of publicans and sinners, to forgive is to be imbued with the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

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